

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound

LOST IN SPACE: ALFONSO CUARON'S

GRAVITY

PLUS

- ABDELLATIF KECHICHE ON 'BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOUR' ● 'COMPUTER CHESS'
- FRANCOIS OZON'S 'JEUNE & JOLIE' ● 'LEVIATHAN' ● RIDLEY SCOTT'S 'THE COUNSELLOR'

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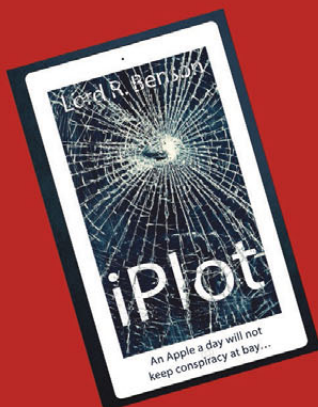
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Tech mates

This issue has a technological bent, looking at the innovations of *Gravity* and fishing documentary *Leviathan*, and the equally remarkable steps backward taken by *Computer Chess*

REGULARS

5 **Editorial** Lost for words

Rushes

- 6 **Nathalie Morris** on an exhibition exploring the style of *The Innocents*
- 9 **Catherine Bray** welcomes the BFI Player
- 10 **Object Lesson:** Hannah McGill is bowled over
- 11 **The Five Key....** lesbian dramas
- 12 **Richard Deming** on Welles's rediscovered *Too Much Johnson*
- 15 **Dispatches:** Mark Cousins has all the answers – it's the questions he doesn't like

The Industry

- 16 **Development Tale:** Charles Gant on *Saving Mr. Banks*
- 17 **The Numbers:** Charles Gant on the return of Woody Allen
- 18 **Brewster:** Ben Roberts on funding children's films

21 **Profile:** Geoffrey Macnab meets Lars Jönsson, producer of *Lukas Moodysson*

Festivals

23 **Demetrios Matheou** in San Sebastián

Wide Angle

- 52 **Ben Walters** meets Portuguese director João Pedro Rodrigues
- 54 **Soundings:** Frances Morgan on *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*
- 55 **Primal Screen:** Geoff Brown at Pordenone's silent film festival
- 56 **Sukhdev Sandhu** hails an extraordinary film inspired by the Swiss novelist Robert Walser
- 57 **Ben Walters** reports from Queer Lisboa

Letters

Endings

112 **Ashley Clark** on Horace Ové's *Pressure*

FEATURES

24

COVER FEATURE:

Space is the place

Gravity tries to depict the actual dangers of spaceflight. **Roger Luckhurst** looks at the surprisingly narrow gap between the cinematic fantasy of life beyond Earth and the chilly reality. PLUS Director **Alfonso Cuarón** and visual effects supervisor **Tim Webber** on the challenge of creating zero gravity in the studio

32

Fight fire with fire

Czech and Slovak filmmakers have struggled to capture the reality of 'normalisation' – the repression that followed the Prague Spring. Now, says **Peter Hames**, a Pole, Agnieszka Holland, has succeeded

34

Past masters

When it comes to 80s period authenticity, Andrew Bujalski's *Computer Chess* has got it taped, thanks to the magic of old-fashioned video technology. **Calum Marsh** asks what the return of analogue means

38

Women in love

Abdellatif Kechiche's *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* has caused no small amount of controversy since winning the Palme d'Or in Cannes, not least for the perceived male slant to its depiction of a lesbian love affair. **Jonathan Romney** considers the film and talks to the director

44

All at sea

An abstract painting set to a *musique concrète* soundtrack, an ocean-going *Le Sang des bêtes*, a *Moby-Dick* for trawlermen – *Leviathan* is both a documentary about the fishing industry, and something far more rich and strange. By **Trevor Johnston**

48

Love for sale

François Ozon's latest film, *Jeune & jolie*, is a cool, provocative blend of teen coming-of-age drama and *Belle de jour*, overlaid with a Françoise Hardy soundtrack. The director talks to **Nick Roddick** about sex, money and the modern teenager

NOTHING SAYS GOODBYE LIKE A BULLET

The Long Goodbye

a Robert Altman film



Robert Altman's seminal crime film is released on Blu-ray for the first time in the world, remastered by MGM Studios and featuring interviews with Altman, star Elliott Gould, cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond, Altman biographer David Thompson, Raymond Chandler biographer Tom Williams, an interview with Maxim Jakubowski on Hard Boiled Fiction, 'Giggle and Give In'; a feature length documentary profile of Altman's career featuring interviews with Altman and his regular stars and collaborators as well as an extensive booklet!

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Ben Walters is cabaret editor for *Time Out*

COVER

Sandra Bullock in *Gravity*
Retouched by DawkinsColour

NEXT ISSUE

on sale 3 December

Contents Reviews

FILMS OF THE MONTH

- 60 *Blue Is the Warmest Colour/La Vie d'Adèle Chapitres 1 et 2*
62 *Child's Pose/Pozitia copilului*
64 *The Counsellor*
66 *Jeune & jolie*

FILMS

- 68 *Baggage Claim*
68 *Battle of the Year*
69 *Breakfast with Jonny Wilkinson*
69 *Bring Me the Head of the Machine Gun Woman*
69 *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2*
70 *Computer Chess*
71 *Day of the Flowers*
71 *Dirty Wars*
72 *Dom Hemingway*
72 *Don Jon*
73 *Either Way/A annan veg*
74 *Ender's Game*
74 *Escape Plan*
75 *The Family/Malavita*
76 *Future My Love*
76 *Gravity*
77 *The Haunting in Connecticut 2: Ghosts of Georgia*
78 *How to Survive a Plague*
78 *In Fear*
79 *Leviathan*
80 *Love Tomorrow*
81 *Marius*
81 *Metallica Through the Never*
82 *Milius*
84 *Pandora's Promise*
84 *Parkland*
85 *Romeo & Juliet*
86 *Runner Runner*
86 *Rurouni Kenshin*
87 *Saving Mr. Banks*
88 *Seduced and Abandoned Séduits et abandonnés*
88 *Sunshine on Leith*
89 *Utopia*
89 *uwantme2killhim?*
90 *V/H/S/2*
91 *iVivan las antipodas!*
91 *Who Needs Enemies*
92 *Wolf Children*

HOME CINEMA

- 96 *Barbara Broadcast, Bullfighter and the Lady, Camille redouble, Children's Film Foundation Collection: Scary Stories, The Mummy, La notte, Red River, Streets of Fire, Take it or Leave it, Time Bandits, The Witches*
DVD features
94 **Nick Pinkerton** celebrates a trio of Rossellini films starring Ingrid Bergman
97 **Charlie Fox** is mesmerised by the cerebral, dreamy *Riddles of the Sphinx*
100 **Mark Duguid** revisits a classic series of British television plays
Television
102 *Portlandia – Seasons 1 & 2, Selling Hitler, Young Montalbano – Collection 1*
Lost and found
103 **Austin Collings** on Australian psycho-family psychodrama *The Boys*

BOOKS

- 104 **Nick Pinkerton** on a life of Richard Pryor
105 **Kim Newman** is mildly thrilled by a collection of essays on the 1930s horror movie
106 **Sukhdev Sandhu** on UK film collectives of the 1970s
106 **Michael Brooke** welcomes the first English-language study of Sergei Parajanov



64



72



72



69

And online this month Stanley Kubrick, cinephile – redux | Unfiction, a new column by Robert Greene | Victor Kossakovsky | DocLisboa Festival and more bfi.org.uk/sightandsound

The Masters of Cinema Series

NOVEMBER NEW RELEASES

NOSFERATU

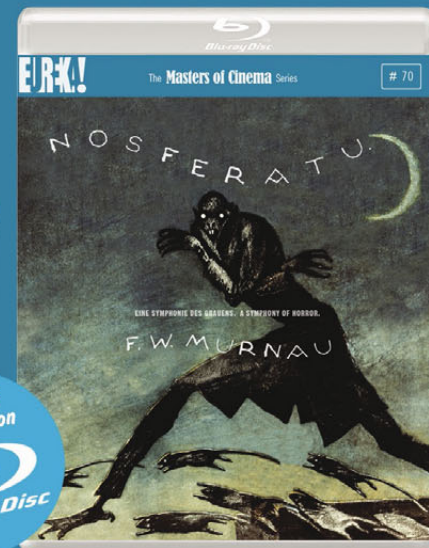
An iconic film of the German expressionist cinema, and one of the most famous of all silent movies, F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu. A Symphony of Horror* continues to haunt — and, indeed, terrify — modern audiences with the unshakable power of its images. By teasing a host of occult atmospherics out of dilapidated set-pieces and innocuous real-world locations alike, Murnau captured on celluloid the deeply-rooted elements of a waking nightmare, and launched the signature "Murnau-style" that would change cinema history forever.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Brand new high-definition restoration by Friedrich-Wilhelm-Murnau-Stiftung in 1080p on the Blu-ray • Stereo and 5.1 scores • Two audio commentaries: one newly recorded by film historian David Kalat; the second by historian R. Dixon Smith and critic Brad Stevens • *The Language of Shadows*, a 53-minute documentary on Murnau's early years and the filming of *Nosferatu* • New video interview with *BFI Film Classics: Nosferatu* author Kevin Jackson • Exclusive video piece taped by and featuring filmmaker Abel Ferrara • Newly translated optional English subtitles with original German intertitles • 56-PAGE BOOKLET featuring writing by Gilberto Perez, Albin Grau, Enno Patalas, and Craig Keller; notes on the restoration; and rare archival imagery.

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"One of the most poetic of all horror films" - *Time Out*

"A visual and emotional treat" - *Empire*

MARTIN SCORSESE PRESENTS

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VOLUME ONE

"The World Cinema Project is a natural expansion of my love for movies. [In 1990], together with my fellow filmmakers, we created the Film Foundation to help preserve American cinema. Much has been accomplished and much work remains to be done, but the Film Foundation has created a base upon which we can build. There is now, I believe, a film preservation consciousness. The World Cinema Project [was] created to help developing countries preserve their cinematic treasures. We want to help strengthen and support the work of international archives, and provide a resource for those countries lacking the archival and technical facilities to do the work themselves."

— Martin Scorsese, WCP Founder and Chairman

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On Dual Format from 25th November 2013

DRY SUMMER [SUSUZ YAZ]

by Metin Erksan

Turkey / 1964



TRANCES [TRANSES]

by Ahmed El Maanouni

Morocco / 1981



REVENGE [MEST']

by Ermek Shinarbaev

Kazakhstan / 1989



Released 3rd December: *Il Bidone* (Fellini)

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Editorial Nick James



LOST FOR WORDS

The question I want to consider this month is whether there's been a gradual shift in the relationship between cinema and speech. Let's begin by comparing two films about characters who we might say are 'all at sea', Woody Allen's *Blue Jasmine* and J.C. Chandor's *All Is Lost*. Whatever you think of Allen's portrait of Cate Blanchett as an abandoned, formerly pampered woman (I found it troubling in an interesting way), there's one thing about it that feels really old-fashioned, and that is its insistence on secondary characters acting as a Greek chorus, telling you what's happening through dialogue. That's nothing new in Allen's films, it's one of his established methods as a screenwriter – what the screenwriting gurus call expository dialogue. Many of them frown on it because it's seen to be somehow uncinematic.

On the other hand you have *All Is Lost*, a gripping lone-man-at-sea drama, starring Robert Redford, in which few words are spoken. This approach reduces the feature film to its supposed essence, as expounded by Sam Fuller in Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou*: "Film is like a battleground. Love. Hate. Action. Violence. Death. In one word... emotion." Perhaps this view helps account for the screenwriter's relatively low status. Yet people talking on screen have dominated the fiction feature since the coming of synch sound. It's as if the spoken word is only there to justify the presence of the movie star, to make them seem even smarter and sexier than they look. Still, the kind of verbose quickfire repartee that Allen favours does seem to me to be in decline.

If we look back at the headline films of the BFI London Film Festival (which has just finished as I write) we can see this tendency in action. On the loquacious Allen side we can place Stephen Frears's *Philomena* and both of the Tom Hanks vehicles *Captain Phillips* and *Saving Mr. Banks*. On the more taciturn side I'd put Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity*, Kelly Reichardt's *Night Moves*, Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* and Pawel Pawlikowski's prize-winning *Ida*. But perhaps the shift is more obvious in the films I'd put in the middle. Steve McQueen's powerful *12 Years a Slave* lets the images do much more of the talking than previous mainstream films about slavery (*The Color Purple*, *Amistad*, *Django Unchained*); in *Inside Llewyn Davis*, those lovers of drop-dead dialogue the Coen brothers more often allow the audience to think for their main character than have him tell it to them; Alexander Payne's *Nebraska* sits on my mid-line by

The decline of dialogue in anglophone films may reflect the influence of 'slow cinema', the international film festival film: the fashionable film of long takes in which people say little



default because it's about a state full of taciturn people.

I'm not talking about something blatant, only a change by slow degrees. If I'm right, there are a number of possible reasons. But before we look at them let's exclude France from the debate – Thierry Jousse, editor of *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1990s, once told me that cinema was an aural art; as far as French cinema goes, I believe him.

The decline of dialogue in anglophone films may reflect the influence of 'slow cinema', which could also be characterised as the international film festival film: the fashionable movie of long takes in which people say little. Critics who favour these films hardly ever seem to think about dialogue. Looking back ten years, to when Charlie Kaufman's films had great cachet, it seems that the very craft of screenwriting has somehow gone out of fashion. In which case philippics against voice-over and expository dialogue may have been self-harming.

Or it could be that cinema's rediscovery of an older demographic has led to a greater trust in the audience's ability to think about what they see for themselves. Or perhaps it is a mild symptom of "the wholesale reconfiguration of art" described by Will Self in a recent tough review of Mark Kermode's book *Hatchet Job*: the old-fashioned, linear Gutenberg mind is inadequate in the face of the simultaneous electronic media through which cinema now disseminates (for a more in-depth and sceptical analysis of this reconfiguration I recommend Vilém Flusser's *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*).

Whatever the case, I stand against any dogmatic concept of the cinematic. To lose the voice-over commentary is to exclude most of Scorsese's films, to rail against the talkathon is to wipe out the legacy of Eric Rohmer (all right, so I let the French back in). At its worst, expository dialogue can feel patronising and unnecessary; but the one thing my Gutenberg mind thinks will bounce back like vinyl, when the handheld screens or implants cease to thrill coming generations, is eavesdropping on conversation – live, written, filmed or whatever. After all, governments pay millions to do it. ☹

IN THE FRAME

THE HAUNTING OF DEBORAH



A new exhibition at BFI Southbank explores the style and sensibility of one of the eeriest and most beautiful gothic films

By Nathalie Morris

Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* (1961) is one of cinema's greatest ghost stories, a masterpiece of ambiguity, fear and atmospheric understatement. Based on *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, it tells the story of a Victorian governess, Miss Giddens (played by a faultless Deborah Kerr), who takes up a post looking after two precocious children. At first all seems idyllic. The children are a delight and the rambling estate of Bly is seductively beautiful. But soon Miss Giddens starts to suspect that the malevolent spirits of her dead predecessor and her lover are haunting the house and seeking to possess her young charges...

A new exhibition, 'Haunted: The Innocents', focuses on the film, using unique production materials from the Special Collections of the BFI National Archive to explore the creation and style of this quintessentially gothic text. The papers of director Jack Clayton, recently donated to the BFI and now available to researchers for the first time, shed a revealing light on the development of the film from James's late Victorian novella via William Archibald's 1950 stage adaptation, *The Innocents*, from which the film takes its name.

From the start of pre-production, Clayton knew that he wanted the house and its atmosphere to be "like an enormous old-fashioned rose, but [...] too big, almost overbloomed", and he enlisted a group of superbly talented collaborators to realise his vision. Exhibition curator Claire Smith takes the motif of the overbloomed rose as a jumping-off point for an exploration of the gothic motifs of bloom and decay, the important and enduring figure of the Victorian governess, and the creation of the uneasy mood and threatening spaces of Bly.

Truman Capote played an essential role in developing the film's claustrophobic and overblown sensibility. The third writer to work on the script, he was enlisted by Clayton to bring a Southern gothic sensibility, an air

Overbloomed rose: Deborah Kerr, 'faultless' as governess Miss Giddens

The London Korean Film Festival

This year's event (7-15 November) celebrates established and emerging talent alike, featuring an enticing retrospective of Kang Woo-suk's action and crime films as well as the premiere of Huh Jung's low-budget debut mystery thriller 'Hide and Seek'.



Napoléon

It has been nearly ten years since Abel Gance's 1927 epic silent biopic of the emperor's early years was seen on the big screen in the UK. Kevin Brownlow's restoration comes to the Southbank Centre on 30 November, accompanied by a live orchestral performance of Carl Davis's score and featuring Gance's original three-screen Polyvision finale.



ON OUR
RADAR



One of Sophia Harris's designs for Deborah Kerr


of decadence and decay, to Bly's corridors, and to tease out the story's ambiguities. Clayton's archive contains handwritten drafts and amendments by Capote, three pages of which are on display in the exhibition. They demonstrate how Capote made the two children more subtly sinister through the creation of a 'whispering montage', which coalesces in dream form in Miss Giddens' growing fears and repressed desires.

Another important contributor to the look and feel of the film was the artist John Piper. Known for his neo-romantic paintings of decaying architectural grandeur and brooding skies, Piper was the perfect choice to conjure up a series of early concept sketches for Clayton, creating visions of Bly in watercolour, pastel and ink, three of which are on show in the exhibition. These ideas were developed and realised by the production designer Wilfred Shingleton, who was responsible for creating the stunning settings which, in conjunction with Freddie Francis's cinematography, so effectively convey Bly's unsettling atmosphere.

Inhabiting this dark world is Miss Giddens, the governess. A series of rare on-set images by the film's stills photographer Ted Reed shows Deborah Kerr wandering the gardens and dark

corridors of Bly, herself like an over-bloomed rose, luxuriantly beautiful but also fragile and ready to fall apart at the slightest touch. Kerr was expertly costumed by Sophia Harris of Motley (the collective name of a trio of designers who worked in theatre and film). A quartet of Harris's designs on display beautifully illustrates how the governess's wardrobe – which was also the wardrobe for a star actress – was conceived. These include a delicate dress of ribbon and white muslin (embodying the notion of Miss Giddens as rose-like), a rich dark red velveteen gown, worn in the sinister 'hide and seek' sequence, and the gothic staple of a white cambric nightdress – just the thing for wandering the eerie corridors at night.

In striking contrast to these elaborate outfits is a more severe black dress designed for Miss Giddens' predecessor, Miss Jessel. Miss Jessel appears as a dark and sinister apparition all the more unnerving for making her entrance by a lake on a bright summer's day. As the film progresses Miss Giddens comes to identify more and more closely with her predecessor, an identification – or possession – signalled by her increasingly frequent appearances in a Victorian governess's classic black and white attire.

The inclusion in the exhibition of an exquisite slate-grey dress by Oscar-winning British costume designer Michael O'Connor for 2011's *Jane Eyre* places the figure of the governess in a wider context, highlighting her enduring importance within gothic film, literature and television. *Jane Eyre* shares many tropes with *The Innocents*: the spinster governess awakened by desire and haunted by a predecessor, an elusive (yet desired) master of the house, and the house itself which becomes a symbol of its inhabitants. *Jane Eyre*'s dress also serves to demonstrate the fine art of the costume designer. Like Sophia Harris, Michael O'Connor makes his costumes historically accurate while skilfully conveying important information about the characters who wear them. Jane's grey dresses help her to blend into the background like a shadow, lightening and eventually moving away from grey as she begins to discover a sense of self-worth. Conversely, Miss Giddens' fashionable day clothes take on an ever-darker hue as *The Innocents* moves towards its tragic end. 

i The exhibition 'Haunted: The Innocents' runs in the Atrium, BFI Southbank, until 31 January

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE SAVING MR. BANKS

25% *Mary Poppins* (1964)

15% *The Shadow of Mary Poppins* (2002)

12% *Finding Neverland* (2004)

10% *Dreamchild* (1985)

10% *His Girl Friday* (1939)

10% *Nanny McPhee* (2005)

8% *The Artist* (2011)

5% *Singin' in the Rain* (1951)

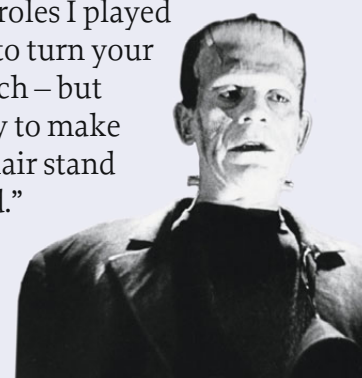
3% *The Bad and the Beautiful* (1952)

2% *Babes in Arms* (1939)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH BORIS KARLOFF

"Horror means something revolting. Anybody can show you a pailful of innards. But the object of the roles I played is not to turn your stomach – but merely to make your hair stand on end."



UK Jewish Film Festival

Taking place in London, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester until 17 November, the UK Jewish Film Festival boasts a programme of over 80 films, including the UK premiere of Rama Burshtein's arranged-marriage drama 'Fill the Void' and Ari Folman's follow-up to 'Waltz with Bashir', the animated sci-fi tale 'The Congress'.



White is the Eye

'Performance' director Donald Cammell's long-unavailable cult psycho-thriller is being released on Blu-ray and DVD by Arrow Films in March next year. Described by David Thomson as "one of the great secret works in cinema", this tale of a serial killer on the loose also features a score co-written by Pink Floyd's Nick Mason.

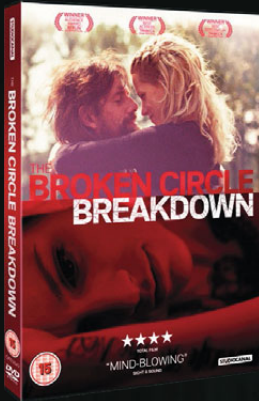


The Wes Anderson Collection

Matt Zoller Seitz's lavishly illustrated monograph raids Anderson's archive for storyboards, photographs and soundtrack wish lists. Meanwhile a conversation between Seitz and the director runs throughout the book, ranging from 'Bottle Rocket' to 'Moonrise Kingdom' and delving into Anderson's influences and working methods.



FILM FESTIVAL SHOWSTOPPERS



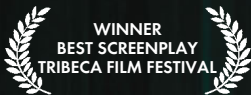
THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN

A romantic tale of two lovers who play in a Bluegrass music band.

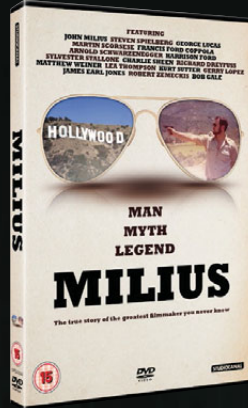
'Mind-blowing'
SIGHT AND SOUND



TOTAL FILM



WINNER
BEST SCREENPLAY
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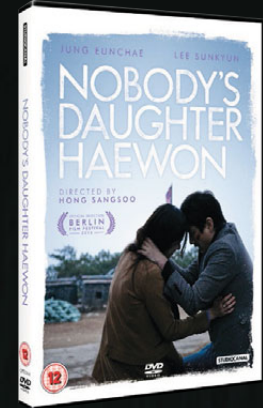


MILIUS

The incredible documentary on the life of influential and controversial director **John Milius**, whose films include *Apocalypse Now*, *Jaws*, *Conan The Barbarian*, *Dirty Harry* and *Red Dawn*.



OFFICIAL SELECTION
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NOBODY'S DAUGHTER HAEWON

A poignant and fascinating drama about a young girl's chance encounter with an ex-lover.

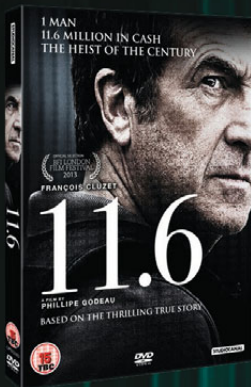
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STUDIOCANAL

PLAYING AT HOME

The newest kid on the VoD block, the BFI Player, aims to add something fresh to the online video experience

By Catherine Bray

A scant 60 years ago, your screen entertainment options were limited. Most – but not all – of the country could receive the BBC Television Service, the single channel broadcasting in the UK, or you could go to the cinema. That was about it. There were more individual cinemas operating, but that aside, the 1950s can't compare to the present day, even for those who had televisions, which many didn't.

Today, you can go to the cinema, you can watch one of hundreds of channels either as they play out, or on a catch-up service, you can order practically any DVD or Blu-ray to arrive at your house the next day, or you can use the internet to download or stream your chosen programme from dozens of legitimate online services – choosing from a selection of thousands of films, TV episodes, interviews and pretty much any other form of onscreen information or entertainment you care to name. The operative word is 'choice'.

Joining a marketplace that's already home to the iPlayer, Netflix, LOVEFiLM Instant, 4oD, the ITV Player, Demand Five, Sky on Demand, Curzon Home Cinema, Film4oD and countless others, the new BFI Player was launched by BFI chair Greg Dyke on 2 October, and will seek to make an impression on consumers potentially jaded by so many possibilities. So how does the new player look to combat the all-too-real danger of audience fatigue?

As BFI Digital Director Edward Humphrey points out, "Early cinema, less mainstream cinema and factual content are sometimes neglected by the more commercial players, so that side of the market is underserved, and can sometimes be ghettoised." Moreover, the challenge for audiences can often lie with navigating an embarrassment of riches to locate what they're interested in and discover things they don't yet know they like. The serendipity of browsing a shelf of DVDs and happening upon something that takes your fancy can be recreated to a certain extent online. But replicating the expertise of the shop owner who showcases disparate but connected films – with forgotten gems put in context by being next to better known routes into a sub-genre or movement – this is something that needs skill, and it is another area where the BFI hopes to find a niche.

Humphrey sees the Player as "a natural extension of what the BFI stands for and what we believe in, expressed in a digital way. So another way that we made the Player different and unique is in the way that it connects the dots a little bit. We obviously want people to enjoy watching film, but more than that we want to build a lifelong love and appreciation of film, so we want to take people on a slightly unexpected journey through film, through creation and context and interpretation."

So, guided by the principle that the reason people visit BFI venues in person is not so that they can watch a film selected at random, but because they are looking for curation and guidance, the BFI Player arranges films as Collections curated by human editors. Humphrey argues that "most commercial platforms don't have the luxury of being able to do that, because they obviously have to drive as many transactions as possible from a customer. So I think we have more scope to tell and cover a broader story about film, and to try and connect to films in ways that traditional platforms wouldn't."

The seven Collections available at launch include Edwardian Britain (one of Humphrey's personal highlights), consisting of 28 hours of film shot between 1900 and 1913 by filmmakers Sagar Mitchell and James Kenyon; Sight & Sound Selects, a collection curated by this magazine; and Cult Cinema, a selection of outré and forgotten films like Joseph Despins and William Dumas's 1971 study of obsession, *Duffer*, in which a teenage boy is torn between the affections of kindly prostitute Your Gracie and sadistic older man Louis-Jack. A film like *Duffer* will set you back around £3.50, while the Edwardian Britain Collection is entirely free to view. Depending on your tastes this may or may not compare favourably with a service like Netflix – £5.99 a month unlimited, but

The BFI Player has a reasonable claim to be offering a more diverse range of free film content than any other player

nothing for free, and fewer films like *Duffer*.

At the pricier end of the BFI Player spectrum are prestige releases like *The Selfish Giant* and *The Epic of Everest*, available for £10 on the same day as they hit cinemas. This is very much in line with the current market for day-and-date VoD, with Curzon Home Cinema also charging £10 for similar titles. With around 60% of their offering entirely free, however, the BFI Player has a reasonable claim to be offering a more diverse range of free film content than any other player – certainly if short films, interviews and lectures are included in the total. A small selection of talks, some over an hour long, are offered, featuring an eclectic mix of speakers, including Alexander Payne, Miranda July, Peter Cook and Viggo Mortensen.

And does it work? There's nothing more frustrating to users than promised whizz-bang technology that falls over first time out of the box: the proof of the pudding is in the user experience. With playback engineered by Ooyala, who have provided similar services to Disney, News Corp and the Telegraph Media Group, there's currently no reason to doubt the Player's tech credentials. The main challenge for the Player will lie in publicising its offering to the right audience, and so fulfilling its place in the BFI's wider strategy. Humphrey, who joined the BFI in January, explains that there's still more to come: "Since I came on board, we've just really been refining what the launch proposition is, and over time we will be adding to and developing the potential of the BFI Player in many more different ways." Watch this digital space. 📺

i The BFI Player is available at player.bfi.org.uk



SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Masculine, feminine, a blue-collar art form and a rich man's plaything – a humble bowling ball can be the whole world



By Hannah McGill

The ordinary, salt-of-the-earth, unpretentious American, the one to whom election campaigns are tailored and in whose name

wars are fought and to whom the indulgent practices of the artsy intelligentsia mean nothing, is customarily painted as hard-working, respectable and conservative with at least a small 'c'. The Coen brothers' *The Big Lebowski* (1998) posits another possibility: what if the American everyman is more accurately depicted as a loser bum, an anti-establishment drop-out who smokes weed, wears his bathrobe all day and parks in the disabled spot if he thinks he can get away with it? Couldn't such an individual be just as much a hero- or anti-hero-in-waiting as any of those clean-cut, well-meaning dweebs played by Jimmy Stewart or Tom Hanks?

The notion that Jeffrey "The Dude" Lebowski – played by Jeff Bridges – is the very man his times deserve, a sort of cosmically ordained representative of humanity and maleness, is threaded throughout the film, from the mystical intonations of Sam Elliot's narrator ("Sometimes there's a man...") to the joke mirror at the home of the other, millionaire Lebowski in which The Dude glimpses himself as *Time* magazine's Man of the Year.

The Dude is characterised by the narrator as a sort of timeless archetype, something blown in – like the narrator himself, who wears a ten-gallon hat – from the old American West. The opening of the film shows a ball of tumbleweed, which rolls, as the narrator's words take us from mythic territory to the bright-lit specifics of contemporary Los Angeles, out of the wilderness and into the city. It then transforms into one of the most significant items in The Dude's life, his pacifist's weapon and idle person's equivalent of a tool: a bowling ball.

Bowling is The Dude's all-American, blue-collar art form; the bowling alley he frequents is a repository for the human detritus of a variety of American dreams, from the Vietnam veteran Walter (John Goodman), whose unresolved war experience still charges his rage at everyone and everything, to a former surfer, a convicted 'pederast' named Jesus, and a clutch of burned-out hippies like The Dude himself. Bowling operates as a sort of great leveller.

In his apartment, The Dude even has a poster of Richard Nixon – presumably

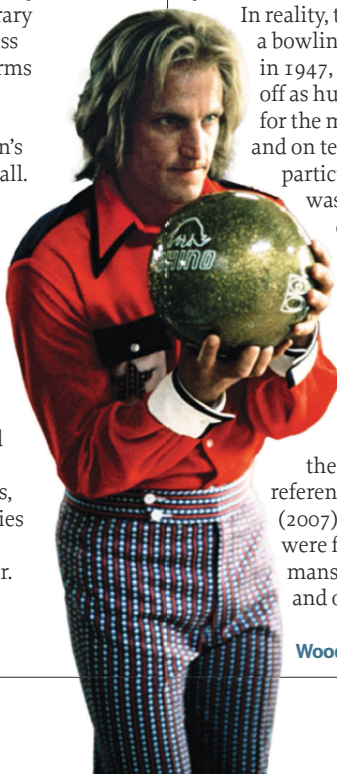


Alley cats: bowlers Jeff Bridges, John Goodman and Steve Buscemi in *The Big Lebowski*

the bogeyman of his student activist days – perhaps to remind himself that ideological differences are shelved along with outdoor shoes in the bowling alley; or that aggression is best confined to the Sisyphian, symbolic warfare of balls against pins.

In reality, the White House has housed a bowling alley since Truman's days in 1947, when the game was taking off as hugely popular entertainment for the masses both in real-life lanes and on television. Truman wasn't particularly interested, but Nixon was a keen bowler, and had his own new lane installed in the building in 1969. In this he followed not only pop culture trends, but also the tradition of America's earliest captains of industry, many of whom used their newfound wealth to have bowling alleys installed in the basements of their homes – a fact resonantly referenced in *There Will Be Blood* (2007), the bowling scenes of which were filmed in a Beverly Hills mansion once owned by prospector and oil man Edward Doheny.

Woody Harrelson in *Kingpin*



The presence of such lavish toys as an indoor bowling alley sitting unenjoyed emphasises the failure or refusal of that film's monstrous, miserly tycoon Daniel Plainview to form friendships or connect with other people. In 1977, Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* also used the bowling alley as a symbol of wholesome enjoyment in reach of the damaged – this time Robert De Niro's Nam-scarred Mike Vronsky. By 2002, Michael Moore was pondering the relationship between violence and bowling more directly in *Bowling for Columbine*, with the suggestion that Columbine High School's duo of mass-murderers went bowling before carrying out their crimes – one of many widely disputed claims in that film, but one which draws particular ire from Moore's critics on the American right, perhaps for its easy association of innocent all-American fun with horror.

Somehow the same association stalks the imagination of *The Dude*. In *The Big Lebowski's* two stoned fantasy sequences, the "aggression" that the Dude so fears from the outside world infests the bowling alley. Not only does The Dude envisage himself pursued by his various tormentors, but America's then-nemesis Saddam Hussein shows up to hand out shoes – one of many connections the film draws between The Dude's tangled predicament and America's messier adventures in foreign



In the fantasy sequences, the 'aggression' that the Dude so fears from the outside world infests the bowling alley

theatres of war. But *The Dude's* sexual concerns also surface, as he sees himself drifting blissfully down the lane between the opened legs of a row of Busby Berkeley-ish showgirls.

The internet is thick with theories about this most gleefully over-analysed of films, and at least one of them has it that the bowling ball vanquishing the ninepins can be equated with *The Dude's* anti-macho resistance to phallic power structures. However, one might also note that bowlers also peep through ladies' legs in the poster art for the Farrelly brothers' comedy *Kingpin*, released two years before *The Big Lebowski*; and that that film draws a memorably crude alignment between the bowling ball and the female form ("It's round, it has three holes, and you stick your fingers into it." "You leave Rebecca out of this, mister!"). Just as *The Dude* picks up others' attitudes and phrases in the course of the film, patchworking together an ideology, so that big rolling ball, like most enduring icons of Americana, looks like different things to different people. 🍷

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THE FIVE KEY...

LESBIAN DRAMAS

Blue Is the Warmest Colour is only the most recent in a line of films that have tried to show the reality of lesbian relationships

By Selina Robertson

Historically, celluloid has served lesbians poorly. They were for decades distorted and misunderstood, the few images that did make it to screen presenting a gloomy homophobic gallery of anti-male victims, killers, prostitutes and neurotics. But cut to the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s – a time when Guinevere Turner (star and co-producer of *Go Fish*) could capture a new queer zeitgeist with her notorious line: "We live completely dyke lives. Our life is so regular to us and foreign to everyone else." No more dreaded male gaze and suicidal endings. Today, LGBT cinema is so mainstream that playing lesbian or gay might just secure you an Oscar.



2 The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant (1972)

Fassbinder's baroque, hyper-stylised account of the sadomasochistic passions and jealousies between three lesbians was one of his best, most controversial films. But many saw it as the height of gay male misogyny, and lesbian groups picketed a screening at the New York Film Festival in 1972.



4 The Watermelon Woman (1997)

A key film in the 90s New Queer Cinema canon, and the first African-American lesbian feature, Cheryl Dunye's self-styled 'dunyementary' was a sharp exploration of her own life in tandem with the 'mammy' role in classic Hollywood cinema. Key cast included Guinevere Turner and Camille Paglia.



1 Mädchen in Uniform (1931)

This Weimar production was the first film to explore the 'schoolgirl crush' theme, which has since run and run. Seen as a subversive plea for humanism during the time of rising fascism, it was banned by Goebbels, while US censors cut the 'offensive lesbian material'. Director Leontine Sagan left Germany soon after finishing the film.



3 Desert Hearts (1985)

One of the first Hollywood films to deal sensitively with a lesbian relationship. The 1959-set story featured strong characterisations and sizzling on-screen chemistry between the two leads, their tender sex scene becoming infamous. Director Donna Deitch referred to the film as her remake of John Huston's *The Misfits*.



5 The Kids Are All Right (2010)

A film about lesbian partnership, parenthood and sexual fluidity, directed by openly lesbian Lisa Cholodenko, got an Oscar nomination: this was a landmark for queer film, even if Cholodenko suffered a backlash from some over her inclusion of hetero sex and advocacy of traditional family values.

NOT ENOUGH ORSON

Rediscovered footage from an early Welles film project may not be revelatory, but the director always springs surprises

By Richard Deming

Vertigo may have unseated *Citizen Kane* from the top spot of the *Sight & Sound* list of greatest films, but it is still the case that *Kane* and its director, Orson Welles, have left an indelible mark on cinema. So restored or recovered Welles material always generates a certain amount of excitement. Beneath that anticipation is a fond hope that a newly discovered Welles film will suddenly make a kind of sense of his fraught filmography, a body of work full of brilliance and frustration, ambition and failure. So goes the hope of the devout: if parts of lost or aborted projects can come to light, then one day we might even unearth the director's true vision of, say, *The Magnificent Ambersons* or *Touch of Evil*. Then Welles's career will seem not like the range of lost opportunities so many take it to be, and its luminous design will become clear.

This wish intensifies the attention gathering around the recent miraculous recovery of Welles's *Too Much Johnson*. For all anyone knew, the one extant print of this silent film from 1938 had been destroyed when the director's Madrid villa burned down in 1970. But the reels mysteriously materialised, not just anywhere, but in Pordenone, Italy, home of the famous annual silent film festival, and have been now meticulously restored by the George Eastman House, the museum of photography in Rochester, NY.

In terms of cinematic history, *Too Much Johnson*, Welles's first professional encounter with cinema, is invaluable. This 38-minute film might – must – foreshadow what would come in 1941, when Welles, just 26, would forever expand cinema's grammar.

Expectations ought to be restrained, though. *Too Much Johnson* is not a complete film, but a

work print rife with extraneous scenes, repeated sequences, poorly lensed experimental shots. Its pacing is uneven and its narrative never fully coheres. Even if the first of its three sections offers the rough shape of Welles's editing, it does not represent any final intention, let alone a directorial vision. This is no evident *Kane* prototype: watching *Too Much Johnson* one still wonders how Welles managed to produce *Kane* as if it were born fully formed and without precedent. Yet the early work does expand our sense of the director's abilities in crucial ways.

Welles conceived the material in the summer of 1938 as part of a Mercury Theatre stage production. *Too Much Johnson* was an 1894 farce adapted from Maurice Ordonneau's *La Plantation Thomassin* by the actor and playwright William Gillette, a legendary Sherlock Holmes in numerous stage productions and a 1916 film. Bored by the exposition that established a wobbly context for a convoluted plot, Welles reworked the backstory into extended film prologues, all canny homages to silent comedies, meant to begin each of the play's three acts. The segments, intended to refashion the play into a multi-media spectacle, were never publicly seen, possibly due to the theatre's technical limitations, possibly because Welles didn't finish the work in time. The play had a brief, inauspicious run at a small theatre in Connecticut, though Katharine Hepburn was so taken by Joseph Cotten in the lead that she tapped him for the original Broadway production of *The Philadelphia Story*.

Too Much Johnson doesn't offer the definitive signs of Welles's visual style. The scenes are all shot outdoors – even the opening sequence depicting the dalliance of two lovers in a

When it achieves the effortless that complex slapstick demands, the film is stunning

bedroom looks like it was shot on a stage outdoors, with the sun providing the lighting. Welles doesn't reconceptualise interiors as he does three years later in *Kane*. The camera, relatively static, never prowls or swoops as it does in *Mr Arkadin* or *Touch of Evil*.

Too Much Johnson further complicates our understanding of Welles's body of work by being often genuinely funny. Throughout, Welles displays an impressive facility for slapstick. He keeps the camera high, giving a Busby Berkeley quality to the framing of some scenes, such as the stars fleeing cops amidst an endless sea of fruit baskets somewhere in New York's market district. The first half suggests Harold Lloyd's *Safety Last!*, its high-flying action often taking place well off the ground and buoyed by a charmingly frenetic score by Paul Bowles, the composer and author (*The Sheltering Sky*).

One revelation of *Too Much Johnson* is Joseph Cotten's physicality. In his first film appearance, he is incredibly acrobatic, almost on a par with Lloyd. Arguably, *Too Much Johnson* has too much Cotten running through alleyways and across rooftops of lower Manhattan and then around a quarry in upstate New York meant to stand in (with the help of rented coconut trees) for the beaches of Cuba. Yet Cotten, pursued by his mustachioed nemesis, a cuckolded husband, bounds elegantly across buildings and sways over the very edges of a roof several stories up while wrestling precariously with a ladder.

If the action lags and becomes repetitious, it is hard to fault Welles – we aren't seeing a final edit that might have effectively honed the visual gags. When it achieves, as it frequently does, the effortlessness that complex slapstick demands, the film is stunning. *Too Much Johnson* reveals that Welles had a true yet unexplored gift for physical comedy and a palette for visual design even wider than anyone had realised. In this early work, minor as it may be, the great master shows us there is still much to learn about his possibilities. 🍿



Joseph Cotten and Arlene Francis



Cotten, rivalling Harold Lloyd for acrobatics



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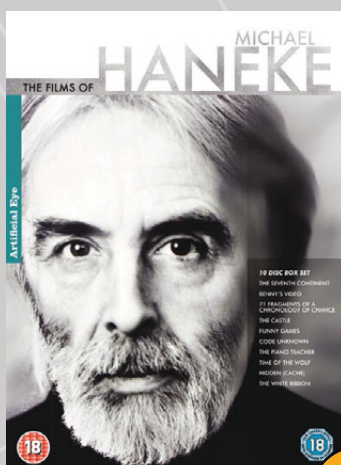
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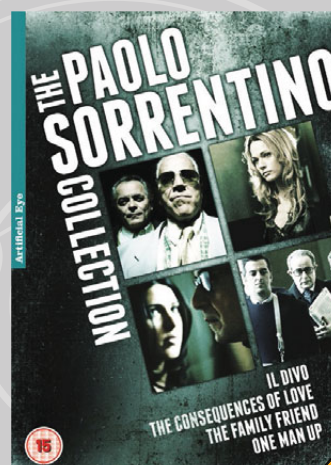
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NOT SO GRAND INQUISITORS

Filmmakers and festival audiences are oppressed by the tyranny of the Q&A. Couldn't they just, you know, talk to each other?



By Mark Cousins

This is a story about floating.

If there are at least 2,000 film festivals in the world, and if each hosts even ten

filmmaker question-and-answer sessions, then that means that there are 20,000 Q&As a year. The figure's probably closer to 50,000. At one festival recently, which showed three of my films, I alone did 14. I've never been to a festival that didn't ask for a Q&A. They play a big part in film culture. They're a staple, a fixture.

And yet I think they're kind of rubbish. As a member of the audience, I often don't stay. If I disliked the movie, I don't want to hear filmmakers who think it's good tell me how it came to be so. If I loved it, I want to clap, maybe cheer, then leave, walk, think or maybe cry. The credits rolling and the curtains closing are the planned ending of an aesthetic experience which doesn't then need a spoken coda. Filmmakers are good at imagery because they're often less so at words. Stephen Frears, whose movies I love, usually answers questions with "because it felt right" or "it was in the script". And, of course, there are people in the audience who like the sound of their voice more than I do, or who haven't gone to the effort of formulating a question before the microphone arrives. Sometimes a Q&A can impart information of real value but, if I stay, I often feel trapped, and others do too.

And if such discussions are often a bit painful, they're usually visually clunky. The director is down at the front, far away. They and the host are badly lit, their feet illuminated by the house lights, their faces in shadow. Or if a logo's projected on screen, their faces are half-covered in text. Or if there's a spotlight, they're blinded, so block it with their hand, and their face is unseen. Sometimes nice cinema managers have chairs, bottles of water and mics, to make the chat more comfy. When I'm in the audience, wanting the toilet and a Merlot, and see this, I think "Oh no, we're going to be here all night." The chair set-up, which takes a bit of time, often has a table too, which is sometimes draped, introducing a touch of 1970s city council foyer to the proceedings. Then, conforming to the law of physics that no two microphones in one space can both work, one mic doesn't. Then, often, a translator needs to make sense of the filmmakers' answers. Once, in China, my translator confessed that she said in Chinese to a crowded theatre, "The foreigner just made a joke. I did not understand it, but please laugh." The audience obliged.

And as a filmmaker, I dread Q&As. I usually don't sleep the previous night, and bring props from the film – the camera it was shot on, editing sheets, anything to make the event



Up close and personal: Nicholas Ray takes questions at the National Film Theatre

Imagine if such talking places, grottos, playpens, were seen as primary not secondary spaces in our film festivals

more visual or interesting and also, I realise, as comfort blankets. The host of the event is usually great and well informed (though a recent first question was "You're an English academic, aren't you?" I'm neither) but I squirm and am so pumped with adrenaline afterwards that I don't sleep that night either.

Even if everything was hunky-dory in the land of the Q&A, for the sake of innovation the format should be rethought. But things aren't hunky-dory, so they need re-imagining. Let's start with the space. The informal conversation once the Q&A has finished, standing with people at the front of the cinema, is often better. After a few minutes of such chatting, we're usually asked to leave the theatre, because the next audience is waiting, so we shuffle into the lobby and talk there, and that's good too. We've swapped a big, formal, lecture-like space (which is good for cinema but not talking) for a smaller, cosier huddle, like a street or bar chat. Space in cinemas is at a premium, but bean-bags in corners, people sitting on the floor, lower

lighting, a glass in hand, these would improve things. Talking places – speakers' corners, the sofa areas in modern creative businesses, community centres, piazza gatherings in warm countries, pub backrooms in colder ones, mosques, salons, etc – have a rich history in human culture, architecture, urban design, activism, etc. We can steal ideas from these, to improve Q&A. Imagine if such talking places, grottos, playpens, were seen as primary not secondary spaces in our film festivals. Imagine if they had a laptop linked to a projector, so the filmmaker could screen clips as she or he talked. I did a TV show called *Scene by Scene*, where I sat with a filmmaker and ten scenes from their work, and had edit control so that we could stop, rewind and slo-mo the scenes, to make movie talk more visual and intimate.

The Q&A disappointment isn't only one of space, it's time too. Talking about a film as soon as it finishes is bad editing, a strange rhythm, like eating toast immediately after a pizza. Imagine if all Q&A sessions happened 30 minutes after the movie finished, in the sofa room, or the café opposite, or some such: time for a coffee or walk around the block. There's a place in Scotland called the Rest and Be Thankful, where you can have a burger and look at the view. Film festivals need rest and be thankfuls. Not as many people would show up to the subsequent discussion, but I bet the chat would be better.

I know this sounds wanky, but I think what I'm on about is the poetics of movie-going, the come-down from seeing a film, and the gear shift that needs to happen between being a child lost in a movie, and a grown-up listening to someone tell you how it was made. Maybe you can make that shift instantly, but I can't, and I don't want it to be a shift from poetry to prose. The great writer Gaston Bachelard wrote about this. When a film finishes, we should float a bit, back down to earth, like the camera floats down into the story at the start of *Blue Velvet*. ☺



Mark Cousins at a Q&A for *The Story of Film*

DEVELOPMENT TALE

SAVING MR. BANKS



Saving graces: Tom Hanks as Walt Disney, Emma Thompson as Pamela Travers

The big problem with telling the story of P.L. Travers – the need for Disney’s cooperation – turned out to be no problem at all

By Charles Gant

During a producing career spanning more than two decades, the UK’s Alison Owen has consistently shown interest in strong female characters, from historical dramas such as *Elizabeth* and *The Other Boleyn Girl* to contemporary tales such as *Brick Lane* and *Tamara Drewe*. And when she read the original screenplay for *Saving Mr. Banks*, concerning the life of *Mary Poppins* author Pamela Travers, she could immediately see the potential of this tough, uncompromising lady. There was just one snag.

Saving Mr. Banks tells the story of Travers’s combative collaboration with Walt Disney over the making of the 1964 *Mary Poppins* film, while delving into the author’s Australian childhood to understand her fiercely protective instincts towards the book’s characters. Explains Owen, “The good news was that I could see there was a great story in there waiting to get out.” But the creative direction Owen wanted to go in would add to the risk. As she explains, “The bad news was that it would need much more of Disney

intellectual property. I thought, if I go to Disney now, they’re going to send me away with a flea in my ear because they’re legendarily protective of their character rights, quite rightly. On the other hand, I can’t get funding from anyone else [for script development], because everyone’s going to say, ‘Well, I’m not going to put money into this and be held hostage by Disney.’”

Saving Mr. Banks began life in Australia, where producer Ian Collie had made the 2002 TV documentary *The Shadow of Mary Poppins*. He quickly saw the potential for a fiction feature, hiring local writer Sue Smith to explore the strong bond between Pamela and her bank manager father, the inspiration for Mr Banks in *Mary Poppins*. Several drafts followed, with financing from the Australian Film Commission (now Screen Australia) and a partnership with local producer and distributor Hopscotch Films.

Collie has numerous TV credits in documentary and scripted narrative but, as he puts it, “I knew I had to team up with a producer with more clout,” especially if he was going to earn Disney’s approval. He partnered with Owen, and the pair brought on board *Calendar Girls* director Nigel Cole, who did another draft with Smith. But the decision to bring on a fresh writer – Kelly Marcel – was key to an eventual happy outcome. BBC Films consented to finance the new script, taking, as

Owen puts it, “a broader and optimistic view that we would eventually get permission”.

Marcel was not an obvious choice – she was best known at the time for the UK version of stage musical *Debbie Does Dallas: The Musical* and an uncredited pass at the film *Bronson*. But Owen’s company Ruby was impressed with her writing samples and was actively looking for a project that suited. Says Owen, “She has terrific humour, dialogue and character depth and is second to none on structure.” Both producers agree that by Marcel’s second draft she had “really nailed it”, and the script landed on the 2011 Black List of best unproduced screenplays, as voted by several hundred US development and production executives.

Now the time had arrived to take the project to Disney, and Owen worked out a strategy with talent agent Bob Bookman, then at CAA (now at Paradigm), about how best to do that. “Everything depended on getting the right person to read it, the smart person, the person who could see the potential, the person who wouldn’t give you a knee-jerk ‘no.’”

Without making formal talent attachments, Owen was able to take the script to Disney with strong interest from Tom Hanks to play Walt, both Meryl Streep and Emma Thompson to play Pamela, and John Lee Hancock (*The Blind Side*) to direct. Cole had already exited.

The plan worked. Disney executive Tendo Nagenda loved the script and recommended it to production president Sean Bailey. Says Owen, "Shortly after that I found myself on a plane to LA, and went into Disney where I was treated pretty much how I imagine Pamela Travers was treated. They really laid out the red carpet... It was, 'Oh my goodness, we are so happy and pleased you are making this project with us, we're so honoured.' For somebody who was pretty much expecting a cease-and-desist notice, I felt, blimey, the wind is really blowing in a good direction. Mary Poppins had turned the weather-vane around for us."

While Owen did have a plan B ("It's difficult to do a deal if you've got no leverage at all. You have to have a situation where you can go, 'OK, well in that case we'll make the film another way'"), it wasn't one that anybody was keen to see enacted.

Although Disney was in a tearing hurry to make the film, so it would be ready for late 2013 and the awards season, the studio's participation suddenly afforded opportunities to add more authentic detail. Marcel, Hancock and Owen were given access to the Disney archive and the taped recordings of Travers's creative sessions with the *Mary Poppins* writers. They spent an evening with Richard Sherman, who with his brother Bob wrote the *Mary Poppins* songs, and who features as a character in the film, played by Jason Schwartzman. Says Owen, "All this great material didn't materially affect the structure of

'For somebody who was expecting a cease-and-desist notice, I felt, blimey, the wind is blowing in a good direction'

the story, so the cake was already there, but we certainly got some pretty marvellous icing."

During the evolution of the script, the balance shifted significantly from the Australian childhood that informed *Mary Poppins* – originally the majority of the story – to the dramatic and funny battle of wits with Walt Disney. Jettisoned by Marcel was anything from the middle period of Travers's life – notably her fractious relationship with her adoptive son Camillus, to whom she lied about his origins, including concealing the fact that he had a living twin brother who she'd declined to adopt. Collie says, "Kelly, to her credit, said: 'Let's get rid of it.' It was so dramatically strong, and taking too much energy from the other story."

When it came to casting, Thompson emerged ahead of Streep as the ideal choice to play Travers. Owen says, "One of the themes is American values versus British ones. We always wanted to have someone to play Walt who was very iconic and white picket fence. Once we knew that we had Tom Hanks on board, who is as American as apple pie, it just felt so right to have Emma, who is as English as a cup of tea, playing opposite him. I know that when Danny Boyle was planning the opening ceremony for the Olympics, he wanted Emma to come in as Mary Poppins. She is the British nanny incarnate." 📌

i **Saving Mr. Banks is released on November 29 and is reviewed on page 87**

THE NUMBERS BLUE JASMINE

By Charles Gant

When, in 2009, Sony Pictures Classics created the marketing campaign for the film *Whatever Works*, there were two words that were conspicuously absent from the poster – or at least buried in the boilerplate credits at the bottom. While six cast members including lead actor Larry David received prominent billing at the top, and the tagline promised simply "A new comedy", only those with eagle eyes would spot that this was a picture written and directed by Woody Allen.

Today, it's hard to imagine a repeat of that. The quality of the prolific output may be variable, but there's been a dramatic recovery since the dark days (2006-07) of *Scoop* and *Cassandra's Dream*. And 2011's *Midnight in Paris* in particular saw a big revival in audience interest and industry respect, with a \$155 million global cinema gross – the biggest ever for a Woody film – and screenplay wins at the Oscars, Baftas and Golden Globes.

So far, in the US at least, *Blue Jasmine* looks unlikely to scale *Midnight in Paris*'s lofty commercial heights, although it's certainly been one of the director's best-performing titles, with \$32 million at press time. In the UK, however, the success has been signal. After just three weekends, the film overtook *Midnight in Paris* to become Allen's biggest-grossing hit here, and at press time £5 million was looking a likely prospect. It's a happy outcome for local distributor Warner Bros, which bought the picture for the UK based on the very limited information the filmmaker is willing to disclose in advance, and knew from experience that Woody always represents a gamble.

Dating is always crucial to success, and in the case of *Blue Jasmine* Warners worked closely with the exhibition sector to deliver a wish-list of specific screens and locations that have worked well for Allen pictures in the past. And while the hefty £834,000 opening box office is testament to a strong marketing campaign, what happened next suggests that successful releases usually require



Cate Blanchett in *Blue Jasmine*

good fortune as well as sound judgement.

"We knew we needed the right weekend that also offered the potential for several more weeks of play," says UK president and managing director Josh Berger. "When you get it right with Woody Allen it's not your standard multiple of your opening. You need to stay on screen. In this instance, the competitive environment has been favourable."

Those concluding words are a significant understatement. With successive dips of just 9% and 11%, *Blue Jasmine* found itself still in the top three on its third weekend of play – a session that saw the weakest overall box office of the year so far. A succession of new arrivals – notably *Thanks for Sharing*, *The Fifth Estate*, *Romeo & Juliet* and Kevin MacDonald's *How I Live Now* – crash-landed and, under pressure from clamorous cinema programmers, *Blue Jasmine* expanded its footprint to 298 cinemas from an original 188. "We knew we had a great movie with a really compelling central performance, and were hopeful of success," says Berger. "It's great when it all comes together." 📌

WOODY ALLEN AT THE UK BOX OFFICE

Film	Year	Gross
Blue Jasmine	2013	£4,093,094*
Midnight in Paris	2011	£2,790,106
Vicky Cristina Barcelona	2009	£2,672,462
Hannah and her Sisters	1986	£2,661,000
Match Point	2006	£2,468,373
Crimes and Misdemeanors	1990	£1,240,200
Bullets Over Broadway	1995	£1,041,427
Everyone Says I Love You	1997	£937,792
Deconstructing Harry	1998	£863,799
Husbands and Wives	1992	£809,234

*Box-office at 20 October

DOING IT FOR THE KIDS

BFI FILM FUND INSIGHTS

There's broad agreement that supporting family films is a good thing: not so much about what counts as a family film



By Ben Roberts

I was recently asked by someone to describe a 'typical day' at the Film Fund and, while I don't find it easy to summarise, there are

typical activities or topics of conversation that are always high on the agenda. Unsurprisingly, I spend a great deal of time talking to representative industry groups about their expectations of myself and of the fund: what we do well, what we do less well, what we should focus on, where we have gone horribly off-piste, and so on.

I arrived at the BFI about six months after the publication of the DCMS Film Policy Review, in which many of these perspectives had spilled onto the page and congealed as recommendations, and from which we have been able to identify a number of strategic priorities. One of the most frequent questions to emerge is: can we do more to support films for families and children?

A number of passionate groups and individuals lobby on the basis that films for young audiences have been neglected through a lack of public funding in recent years. Recommendations in the DCMS report have emboldened them, rightly. My first participation in this debate came a few weeks into the job, on a panel at the Children's Media Conference in Sheffield. What I discovered was less a 'sector' than a collection of those lobbyists. The strength of voices and opinions was palpable; what was less evident was any sign of an actual 'industry' – of producers, filmmakers, financiers, commissioners who were pressuring us to do more.

My early comment to all of them was that we were not turning down family projects in any real number, we just weren't seeing them. This doesn't surprise me. The family market is saturated by US studio films (mostly animated and based on pre-existing brands), and family audiences are expensive to reach. Independent British films for this audience are by necessity mostly from the lower budget end, but since they are also mostly regarded as 'local' films and do not travel, even these low budgets can be hard to raise.

As one-offs the odd family film will get across the starting line through determination, and I can point to a couple of ambitious British family film projects that we are hoping to support. But both projects have mostly adult casts, and so while they are designed to entertain a family audience, they don't represent modern British children in

We were not turning down family projects in any real number, we just weren't seeing them



The Selfish Giant

any meaningful way, or act as a mirror in which today's children can identify themselves.

Fast-forward some 16 months and I'm writing the morning after the BFI LFF awards at which the two young boys from Clio Barnard's *The Selfish Giant* were given a special commendation by the jury for the Best Newcomer award; the film itself – which we have supported through development, production and distribution – opened in cinemas at the end of October. Spinning off from Oscar Wilde's children's story, Barnard's film is both tender and angry. She has said it is "a film about love, deep friendship and loyalty between two boys... played out in an adult world where something has gone fundamentally wrong." The film has been referred to more than once as a modern-day *Kes*, and the comparison is not unfair, except that I would say Clio's film is more cinematic: magic social realism if you like.

When I mentioned *The Selfish Giant* to the groups interested in family films, it was mostly dismissed as irrelevant, an arthouse film for an adult audience – it has a '15' certificate in the UK so it wasn't 'for children'. But, hang on, Barry Hines's novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* was (and still is, I believe) on the National Curriculum, and I watched Ken Loach's film version of *Kes* at school. In 2005 the BFI listed it as one of the top 10 films to watch before the age of 15, alongside the likes of *Toy Story* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

These certainly aren't the japes-and-scrapes children of the Children's Film Foundation, or the golly-gosh types of *The Railway Children*, or even Nanny McPhee's charges. But I hope that *The Selfish Giant* is shown to children, at least in schools, and that it will have an impact on them. For a boy from a nice middle-class background, the life and relationship of the brothers in *Kes* were as eye-opening and alien as the Southern California of *ET*, except that these boys had the same accent as my dad, and I was able to make strong associations and comparisons with myself.

As we head into a Film Policy Review review, we can point to some support for family and children's films. But in industry terms, whether you're talking about education or audience development or distribution or TV, it's clear that the family-friendly film continues to mean different things to different practitioners. That's something we need to keep in mind as we try to understand where our modest investments can have maximum effect. @bfbfen

IN PRODUCTION

● **Benoît Jacquot** has cast Catherine Deneuve, Charlotte Gainsbourg, Chiara Mastroianni and Belgian actor Benoît Poelvoorde in his next film, *3 Hearts*. The film, co-written by the director with Julien Boivent, follows the events that ensue when a man misses his train back to Paris and has a chance meeting with a woman.

● **Michel Hazanavicius** has been filming his follow-up to the Oscar-winning *The Artist*. Shrouded in secrecy, the film is reportedly titled *The Search* and, like *The Artist*, stars Hazanavicius's wife Bérénice Bejo, this time as an NGO employee on assignment in Chechnya. Shooting has taken place in Georgia and in Paris.

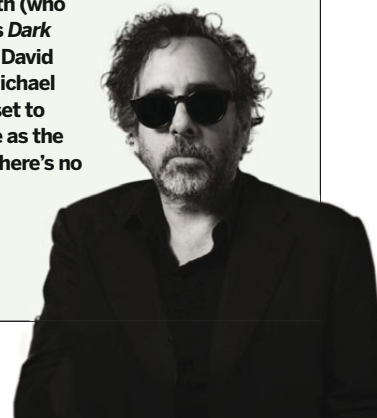
● **Im Kwon-taek**, the veteran South Korean director whose 101 features include *Chihwaseon* (2002) and *Mandala* (1981), is to direct his 102nd: *Hwajang*, based on the 2004 short story 'From Powder to Powder' by Kim Hun. It concerns a middle-aged advertising executive's infatuation with a young woman while his wife is dying from cancer.

● **Werner Herzog's** unlikely ascendancy to the Hollywood mainstream, following his appearance in the Tom Cruise vehicle *Jack Reacher*, seems confirmed by reports that he has lined up Damian Lewis and Nicole Kidman to star in *Queen of the Desert* – the true story of Gertrude Bell (Kidman), the British diplomat, writer and explorer who played a crucial role in the development of the Middle East at the dawn of the 20th century. Lewis will play Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Doughty-Wylie, who has an affair with Bell. Robert Pattinson is said to have signed up to play T.E. Lawrence.

● **Naomi Kawase**, the Japanese director who has had three features nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes, most recently 2011's *Hanezu*, is shooting her next film *2 Ways* on Amami Island in Japan. It tracks the relationship between a teenage boy and girl, and "the nature and spirits that surround them".

● **Woody Allen** is to follow the success of *Blue Jasmine* with *Magic in the Moonlight*, shot over the summer in the south of France. Colin Firth, Marcia Gay Harden, Emma Stone and Eileen Atkins head the cast. The story is thought to be a romantic comedy taking place during the 1920s and 30s.

● **Tim Burton** (below) is reportedly to make a sequel to his breakthrough 1988 film *Beetlejuice*. Rumours of a second film have circulated for years, but now look more reliable: a script has been written by Seth Grahame-Smith (who wrote Burton's *Dark Shadows*) and David Katzenberg. Michael Keaton looks set to reprise his role as the titular ghost; there's no word as yet on whether Alec Baldwin and Geena Davis will return.



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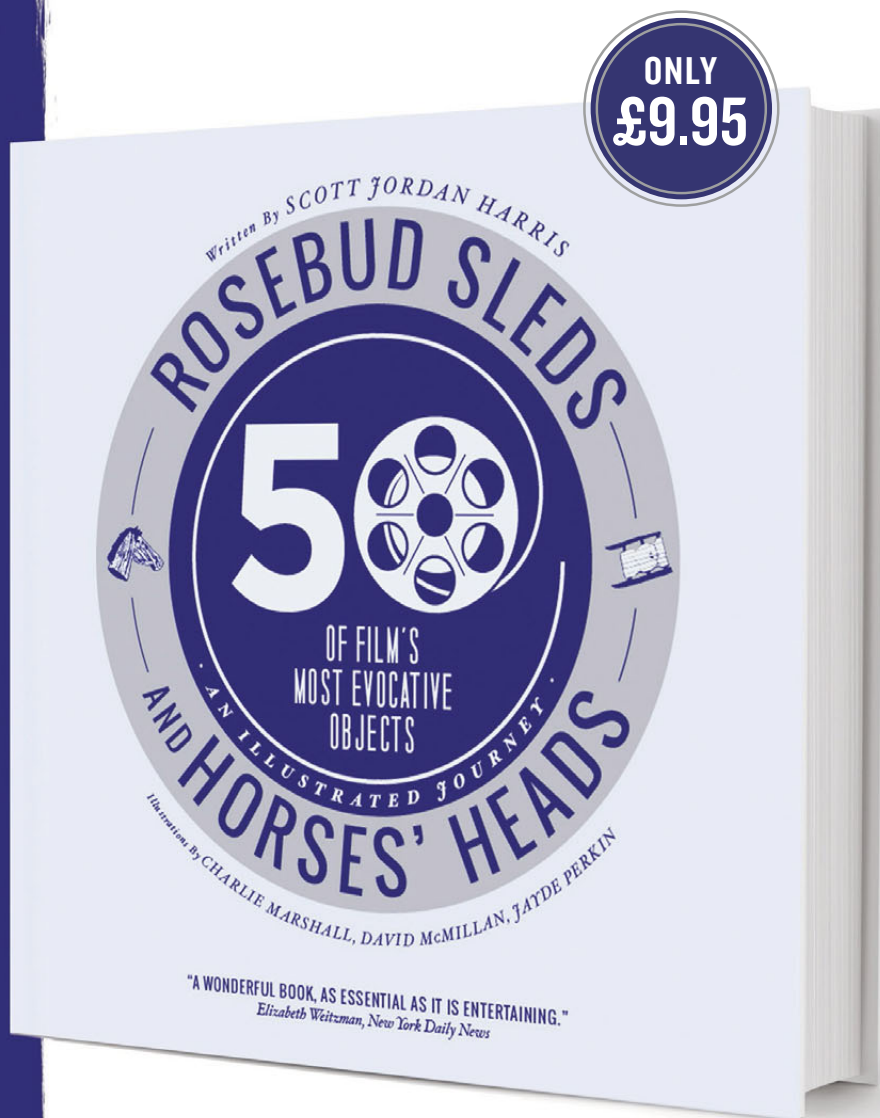
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LARS JONSSON

The Swedish producer has found international success by staying small and nurturing relationships with directors

By Geoffrey Macnab

The producer Lars Jönsson is founder and boss of Memfis, one of Sweden's most influential production companies. He is responsible for nurturing the careers of such directors as Josef Fares and Maria Blom and has been the Swedish co-producer on most of Lars von Trier's movies since the mid-1990s. But Jönsson is probably best known internationally for his close working relationship with Lukas Moodysson (whose new feature, *We Are the Best!*, about three punkish teenage girls roaming the streets of Stockholm during the early 1980s, has just screened at the London Film Festival).

Jönsson first noticed Moodysson when the young would-be director was making a name as a poet, in the late 1990s. By that time, Jönsson had already produced *House of Angels* (1992), by British expat Colin Nutley, and co-produced *Breaking the Waves* (1996), by von Trier. "There was a need of some freshness in Swedish cinema then," Jönsson says. "In the same way my friend Peter Aalbaek [Jensen] had teamed up with Lars von Trier and created a lot of exciting projects together, I wanted to find a couple of directors to do the same with..."

It took time for the relationship to gel. Early on, Moodysson sent Jönsson three feature film scripts: he rejected all of them. "They were all good but they were not fantastic," he recalls. Others might have moved on, but Jönsson persevered, eventually receiving the screenplay for *Fucking Åmål* (English title *Show Me Love*). This was to be Moodysson's debut feature and breakthrough hit, a small-town story about teenage girls who start a romantic relationship.

Fucking Åmål wasn't easy to finance, with a first-time director working with a young cast (and so no stars) and lesbian themes. When Swedish public funders turned Jönsson down, he found funding from the Danish Film Institute and the Swedish regional film centre Film i Väst, set up in Trollhättan on the west coast to boost employment and filmmaking in the region.

The rhapsodic response to *Fucking Åmål* took the filmmakers by surprise. Ingmar Bergman pronounced it "the first masterpiece of a young master"; box-office performance was astonishing: the film sold over 800,000 tickets in Sweden and performed just as strongly across Scandinavia.

Moodysson's next project, *Together* (2000), a comedy-drama set in a 1970s commune, was another huge popular success. The challenge now was that audiences expected Moodysson to make crowd-pleasers. *Lilya 4-Ever* (2002) represented a first change in direction – a film about a young Eastern European woman forced into sex slavery. "In one way, it was the same kind of film as the two first ones, in the sense that it was very compassionate and you're close to the characters. Even though it is a very harsh film, there are moments of humour."

Despite the tough material, it sold widely to international distributors. Together with Peter



Production values: Lars Jönsson has stayed loyal to Lukas Moodysson throughout his career

Aalbaek Jensen, Jönsson had helped set up the sales outfit Trust, which also represented von Trier's films in the international marketplace; and while he sold his shares ("I just wanted to focus on producing, not being part of a sales company"), his relationship with Trust was a platform for ensuring that Moodysson's work was seen all over the world.

The problem was that Moodysson was moving away from the mainstream. *A Hole in My Heart* (2004) was an experimental drama about the making of a pornographic film. "I tried to be very, very clear with the distributors about what kind of movie we are making," Jönsson says. "But Lukas had so many diehard fans that even though we had warned the public...there were still 30,000 admissions in the first weekend. It was hard to keep the audience away in the beginning!"

By now, it was clear that Jönsson would stick with Moodysson whatever creative direction he took. They had an obvious rapport. "We are lucky to have each other and can easily understand each other's minds," Jönsson suggests. "We also argue. It's very often in the editing process that we argue very much at a certain point in time. There can be a lot of agony and hard feeling!"

Jönsson regards all the directors he works with – Maria Blom as well as Moodysson – as auteurs. "A lot of people in the film business might find it hard to work with auteurs, but for me it is easier – I have one person to handle and really, really get close to. For me, it is always more of a struggle to adapt a script and then try to get a director into it."

One reason to make 'We Are the Best!' was to really feel that it was great fun to make movies again – and this was great fun!

With *Mammoth* (2009), Moodysson took the leap into English-language filmmaking, working with two well-known actors, Gael García Bernal and Michelle Williams. The \$10 million film received some of the most withering reviews of Moodysson's career.

"It was quite tiring, the volume of the project. We shot in Thailand and the Philippines. We shot in New York City and we shot in Sweden," Jönsson recalls. "Just the research process was too long. We could have made one Moodysson movie in the Philippines and one in Thailand and one in Sweden for the same amount of money if we worked the usual way we worked."

Moodysson stepped aside from directing for almost four years, until *We Are the Best!* This time, the process was more straightforward: "It might be that it suits Lukas' filmmaking more to have a lighter set-up," Jönsson muses. The film was well reviewed and sold widely after its Venice premiere. Now, Moodysson and Jönsson are planning new projects. "One reason to make this film was to really feel that it was great fun to make movies again – and we thought this was great fun!"

Jönsson always arranges the financing of Moodysson's films so that he and the director have full creative autonomy. "It's me and him that can quarrel and fight. We don't have to go to a board."

The producer continues to run Memfis (founded in 1989) alongside his colleague Anna Anthony, who produces Josef Fares's movies, while Jönsson exec produces. And no, he has no intention to sell up to a major or to enlarge.

"It has been fantastic to be independent for 20 years and I want to stick to that," Jönsson declares. "It is fantastic to be that free and to be able to navigate in whatever direction I want!"

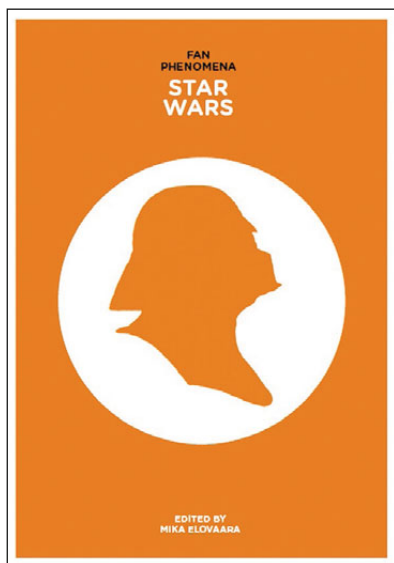
i We Are the Best! will be released in the UK in March

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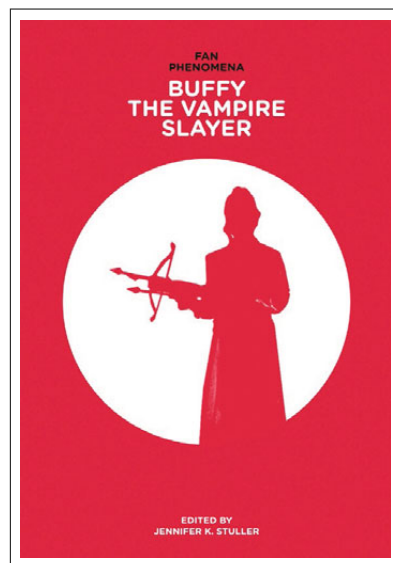
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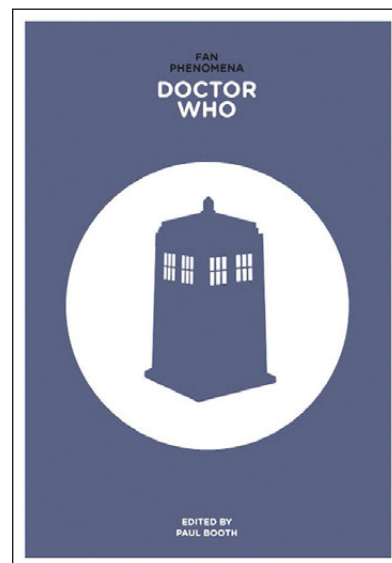
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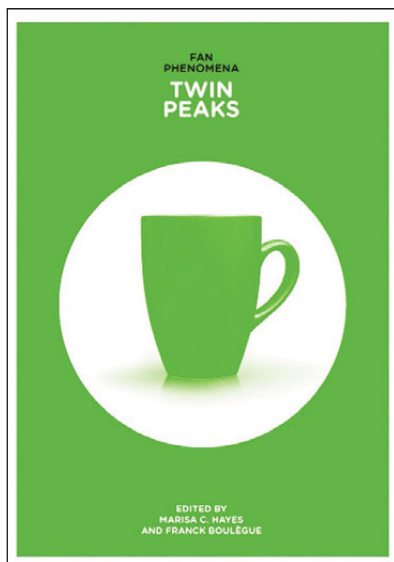
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Festivals

SAN SEBASTIAN

SHELL SHOCK

Venezuela triumphs in the Basque country. Plus marital war, anchovy war, 'How I Won the War', and sex, death and horses in Iceland

By Demetrios Matheou

San Sebastián's support of Spanish language films is always extensive. Even so, before this year's festival no one would have expected a small film from Venezuela to walk away with the coveted Golden Shell for best film. Despite the vast sums of money that the late Hugo Chávez poured into Venezuelan cinema, the country's filmmakers lag behind the rest of Latin America in finding the narrative artistry to make strong local stories compelling for a foreign audience. But Mariana Rondón's *Bad Hair* is a step in the right direction.

It concerns a nine-year-old boy obsessed with straightening his locks – part of his fantasy of being a singer, but a sign to his stressed-out single mother that he's gay. A combination of maternal concern (the lad would suffer in their macho environment) and her own homophobia turns her against him. Shooting with a keen eye for urban spaces, Rondón offers a vision of life in a Caracas neighbourhood that makes our own sink estates look like holiday camps. While her theme – the problematic confluence of parenting, poverty and prejudice – is a tad under-developed, jury president Todd Haynes and his colleagues clearly appreciated the film's ambition and accessibility.

Another Latin film dealing with a mother and son relationship – this time with that deadpan restraint common to Latin comedy – was Fernando Eimbcke's third feature *Club Sandwich*, which won the best director prize. Set in an out-of-season resort in Oaxaca, Mexico, it charts the fraying bond between a holidaying mother and her teenage boy when he gets amorous with a girl guest. The older woman only has herself to blame for losing his attention; when he asks if he's sexy, she says "Not like Prince."

Other Latin films in the festival included the Chilean *Raíz* ("Root"), a rainswept, morose but absorbing tale about a young woman who helps her dead servant's son search for his father in a remote forest; and *The German Doctor*, directed by the Argentine Lucía Puenzo – a gripping drama, based on a true story, concerning a Patagonian family who unknowingly play host to the Nazi "angel of death" Joseph Mengele.

Among the Spanish films, the biggest crowd-pleaser was *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed*, directed by David Trueba and also based on a true story. The ever-personable Javier Cámara stars as a school teacher in Franco's Spain who uses Beatles lyrics in his English classes and, when he learns that John Lennon is in Almería to shoot Richard Lester's *How I Won the War*, determines to meet his hero. On the way from Madrid he gives a ride to two runaways, the teacher's fanboy quest taking on a deeper meaning for young people feeling the era's repressive pinch.



Sinking feeling: Fernando Eimbcke's *Club Sandwich*


Jim Broadbent won best actor for his performance in Roger Michell and Hanif Kureishi's marital war film *Le Week-end*. But his equally deserving co-star Lindsay Duncan was pipped for the actress gong by Marian Alvarez, whose intense turn as an ambulance driver with psychological problems is the only reason for watching Fernando Franco's *Wounded*. A film editor making his directorial debut, Franco relies on close-ups of his hard-working star to paper over the implausibility and coldness of his script.

By contrast, the winner of the screenplay prize, Bertrand Tavernier's political satire *Quai d'Orsay*, fizzes with intelligence. Adapted from a graphic novel, this is a Gallic *The Thick of It*, with a little less venom but better styling and a winning blend of verbal and physical comedy. Thierry Lhermitte plays the silver-haired, charismatic clown of

a foreign minister (based on Dominique de Villepin) who spouts aphorisms from Heraclitus and frets about his highlighters while his minions tackle a weapons crisis in the Middle East, civil war in Africa and an "anchovy war" with Spain. Tavernier, who co-wrote the script with the comic book's creators, directs with panache.

Unlike the versatile Tavernier, Jean-Pierre Jeunet only has one box of tricks, and neither 3D nor an American setting prevents an overwhelming sense of déjà vu afflicting *The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet*. Boredom was the subject and also chief problem of *Luton*, by the Greek Michalis Konstantatos, whose stylistically and emotionally derivative first feature might serve as a nail in the coffin of his country's "weird wave".

More successful in its oddness was Denis Villeneuve's *Enemy*, coinciding with a special screening of the Canadian director's *Prisoners* and also starring Jake Gyllenhaal. Whereas that film is a conventional, if dark, child abduction thriller, *Enemy* leans toward Cronenberg, Lynch and Kafka. Gyllenhaal's introverted university lecturer sees his double in a rented video, leading to a creepy game of cat and mouse between himself and the actor.

But in terms of sheer originality and audacity, the highlight of this year's festival was *Of Horses and Men*. It's set in an isolated Icelandic community, where director Benedikt Erlingsson posits a symbiosis between human and animal that is at turns humorous, touching and cruel. The film consists of one startling vignette of life, death and sex after another: a man's drastic action to survive a snowstorm; man and horse swimming out to sea in the former's mad pursuit of vodka. Winner of the New Directors award, it's an exhilaratingly strange film. 

Venezuela's filmmakers lag behind the rest of Latin America. But 'Bad Hair' is a step in the right direction



Sink estate: Mariana Rondón's *Bad Hair*



SPACE IS THE PLACE

Alfonso Cuarón's 'Gravity' tries to depict the dangers of spaceflight realistically. But the fantasies of science-fiction cinema and the realities of mankind's ventures beyond the atmosphere have never been too far apart

By Roger Luckhurst

In 1950, the **George Pal Technicolor** production *Destination Moon* set a new standard of realism in depicting the mechanics of getting Americans to the moon. They hired Robert Heinlein to co-write the script, the former naval engineer who took science fiction from the pre-war pulps to the post-war slicks and bestseller lists. Heinlein knew his stuff because he was hanging out with rocket pioneer Jack Parsons (who was also into ritual sex magic and partying with L. Ron Hubbard, as it happens). The film laboriously explained the physics of rocketry and lectured on the virtues of rockets being built by private industry, not the state. At the end of the 1950s, Heinlein,

arguing for the militarisation of space to counter threats, wrote *Starship Troopers*—later turned by Paul Verhoeven into a queasy satire about a perpetual war against bugs.

The sublime alien landscapes of *Destination Moon* were created on a vast set painted by Chesley Bonestell, who had just published an art book, *The Conquest of Space*, full of majestic swathes of otherworldly landscapes, which had a huge influence on advocates of space exploration like Arthur C. Clarke and Carl Sagan. Bonestell, who had done matte paintings for *Citizen Kane*, helped *Destination Moon* win an Oscar for its design. He went on to work with the genius of Nazi rocketry, Wernher



END OF HER TETHER
Sandra Bullock, in *Gravity*,
coming to terms with the
fact that planet Earth is
blue and there's nothing
she can do



A VOID
Sandra Bullock as Ryan Stone and George Clooney as Matt Kowalski marooned in space in *Gravity*



von Braun, who had been spirited to America to head their rocket research in 1945 (the murderous regime of slave labour used to build the V2 rockets was conveniently forgotten, except by Thomas Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow*). Together, Bonestell and von Braun produced a famous magazine series called 'Man Will Conquer Space Soon'. Soon enough, von Braun was fronting space propaganda films for Disney.

Significantly, the latter half of *Destination Moon* is about mission crisis, the threat that the four astronauts will not be able to return to earth. Our heroes nobly offer themselves up for sacrifice before a technical fix is found. Even before NASA was invented, American science fiction was imagining the kind of cataclysm in space that is the subject of Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity*.

America only properly joined the space race with the traumatic shock of the launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957: NASA was founded six months later. At the United Nations, a Soviet spokesman declared Sputnik proof positive of the scientific superiority of Marxist-Leninism. In America, there were genuine fears that the Soviets were intent on staining the moon a Communist red to symbolise their world domination. All those B-movie paranoid fantasies in the 50s, from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to *I Married a Monster from Outer Space*, merely provided the framework for these hysterical responses.

There has always been a strange interplay between the American military-industrial complex and science-fiction cinema. One historian calls the whole space programme an "elaborate remake of *Destination Moon*". The Apollo launches in the 1960s were television spectacles with vast audiences, avowedly designed as ideological exercises to pull a profoundly disunited America together. This was the apotheosis of America as the Rocket State. Even historical remakes, like Ron Howard's *Apollo 13* (1995), seem to hark back to a lost coherence of national purpose fostered by the space race.

Ever since that moon walk footage from 1969, conspiracy theorists have argued that the event was faked on Hollywood sound stages. Peter Hyams's film *Capricorn One* (1977), inspired by those conspiracy theories, involved a fake landing of O. J. Simpson on Mars. The film only fuelled more cracked theories. It was Stanley Kubrick who directed the whole Apollo moon thing about the time of 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968). The secret confession is there in the knitted Apollo XI on Danny Torrance's jumper in *The Shining*, made ten years after the hoax. Obviously.

In 1983, Ronald Reagan announced his backing for the Strategic Defence Initiative ('Star Wars') after reading a report written by a bunch of right-wing science-fiction writers, headed by Robert Heinlein and Jerry Pournelle, formerly an engineer in the space programme. They argued the militarisation of space was the only motor for innovations in space exploration. Reagan, who just wanted his own Death Star, promptly signed up to what proved to be a very expensive science-fiction dream.

In the digital era, the interchange between military and cinematic virtual technologies has accelerated. Famously, some of the future tech created by Spielberg for *Minority Report* went on to be developed in the real world, the synergies of the computing and cinema SFX industries steadily blurring. James Cameron, always one to blend these hardwares, made *Avatar* seem like a trailer



for one possible militarisation of space in the near future. As the saying goes, movies about the future tend to be about the future of the movies.

Gravity belongs to this tradition of stretching cinema technologies to aim for absolute verisimilitude of the experience of humans in space. The plot is a rigorous exploration of the so-called Kessler Syndrome, a hypothesis first propounded by a NASA scientist in 1978, that space junk in low orbit around the Earth might reach a sufficient density to cause a cataclysmic cascade of collisions that would knock out satellite communications and endanger all space travel. The spectacular CGI backdrops have been generated from thousands of images provided by NASA. The creative team studied thousands of hours of NASA footage taken by astronauts. The Explorer Shuttle and the International Space Station are perfect simulacra, although they cheated a little with the interior of the Soyuz spacecraft for dramatic effect.

The production notes provided by Warners go into geek overload about the technical innovations of the film. They invented a whole new lighting rig to match live actors with CGI backdrops. The two actors, Sandra Bullock and George Clooney, were suspended inside an innovative wire rig and animated by puppeteers to simulate weightlessness. Alfonso Cuarón's preference for long, fluid takes meant cameras programmed on robot arms were adapted from automated car factories. It results in a film that, although in a classic three-act

structure, abandons scenes for a kind of continuous flow allowed by digital manipulation, the tension shifting up and down with the pulsing soundtrack. The 3D aims to further immerse the viewer in what proves to be a thoroughly kinetic experience of the hostility of outer space.

At this end of American adventure in space, however, after years of budget cuts, the film feels curiously nostalgic, from Clooney's space-jock wisecracking onwards. That is a retired space shuttle that they emerge from, an ancient Hubble telescope they are repairing, a dilapidated International Space Station to which they must retreat. The storm of space junk is precipitated by a Russian attempt to destroy an old satellite, as if the old Star Wars scenario was still live. Everything feels in the past, and *Gravity*, after all, is about reconnecting to the pull that will bring beleaguered astronauts back to Earth. It looks back and down, not out and up.

It is striking how rapidly the utopian thrust of Apollo 11's successful landing on the moon was left behind. Ron Howard's *Apollo 13* is about the 'successful failure' of a near fatal mission, the ingenuity that brings the three astronauts back to Earth. Live TV transmission of Apollo missions had already been abandoned, just a few months after Armstrong's moon walk, and the channels only began paying attention once the Apollo 13 astronauts got into trouble. Almost from the start of manned missions, the English science-fiction writer J.G. Ballard was imagining the ruined and rusting gantries of Cape

There has always been a strange interplay between the American military-industrial complex and science-fiction cinema

SPECIES OF SPACES
Visions of space travel, as seen in (clockwise from top left) *Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Destination Moon* (1950), *Apollo 13* (1995) and *Capricorn One* (1977)





Though 'Gravity' is presented as a great technological marvel, it is also a film saturated in mourning and loss, and not just for a vanished era of big NASA budgets and regular shuttle flights



Canaveral haunted by forgotten astronauts, the puerile delights of outer space abandoned for the trippy psychic worlds of inner space. Ballard was hated by gung-ho Americans for that, but seems to have the edge on imagining the near future. In *Moon*, likewise, Sam Rockwell's greatest threat is his own psychic splitting under the duress of intense solitude in outer space.

In science-fiction cinema, what endures from the 60s and 70s is not the convenient fiction of warp drive from *Star Trek* or the World War II dogfights upgraded for the bomb run on the Death Star in *Star Wars*, but the irritation and boredom of interminable spaceflight in Douglas Trumbull's *Silent Running* (1971) or John Carpenter's *Dark Star* (1974). "Don't give me any of that intelligent life bullshit, just find me something to blow up," the lieutenant snaps in Carpenter's mordant comedy. An explosion has jettisoned the crew's entire supply of toilet paper and they sleep on the floor in an improvised dorm. After tetchy Bomb Number 20 has decided to blow up, the fate of the surviving astronauts, spinning in space, is rather different from *Gravity*. Talby sails off to circle the universe eternally with the Phoenix Asteroids; Doolittle joyously surfs into the atmosphere of a planet and to certain death on a piece of debris from his own ship.

This is the low-rent malfunctioning world that writer Dan O'Bannon then applied to *Alien*, where 'Right Stuff' heroics are replaced by blue-collar workers kvetching over bonus shares as they divert to an SOS beacon on an unknown planet. *Alien* concentrates the inhuman environment of outer space into the creature that is brought into the *Nostromo* through the howling gale on the planet

surface. The film aligns the vulnerable orifices of the human body with the portals of a spaceship: neither proves to be safe from invasion.

Although *Gravity* is presented as a great technological marvel, it is also a film saturated in mourning and loss, and not just for a vanished era of big NASA budgets and regular shuttle flights. The exterior drama of Sandra Bullock's survival of hurtling space junk is paralleled by an interior journey in which she must confront and overcome deep personal loss. This is the first time I can recall having to dodge 3D tears flying out of the screen: Cuarón moves from scenes of epic destruction to these tiny gestures with impressive skill.

As science officer Ryan Stone, Sandra Bullock's vulnerable female body, shut down behind her technical expertise, left psychologically fragile by loss, is continually associated with the Mother Earth hanging above her. The personal trajectory of the film is about Stone being shifted by the crisis that she faces from melancholic denial into healthy mourning. A film so intent on being as literally true to spaceflight as possible also wants to be a giant metaphor of loss.

In an odd way, this aspect of *Gravity* feels like an implicit riposte to Lars von Trier's extraordinary hymn to the depressive state, *Melancholia*. In that film, the naive enthusiasm for awe and wonder for space exemplified by Kiefer Sutherland is bested by Kirsten Dunst's melancholic embrace of annihilation when worlds collide. The film is a vindication of the right to be apocalyptically miserable. The negative sublime of von Trier's obliteration of his characters in the final scenes of *Melancholia* is exactly rebutted by Stone's critical refusal to give in to her losses. Against European art-house depression, Cuarón embraces the engineer paradigm that drives American can-do science fiction. Who better to talk you out of certain death than the silky-voiced George Clooney? There is some irony in the thought that the star is now rich enough to buy satellite time to keep a spying eye on human rights violations in Somalia: that sure is a can-do attitude.

We have come a long way from the fusion of cinema and space technology in 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. Although Kubrick undercut the human dimension in his vast technological ensembles of space travel, there was an absolute investment in a cinema of the future and the future of cinema. Where the Stargate hurls us away from our solar system towards a new stage of human evolution, *Gravity* longs only to fall back to Earth. Perhaps this is what austerity science fiction looks like.



Gravity is released on 8 November and is reviewed on page 76

VACUUM PACK

The low-rent, malfunctioning version of spaceflight, as seen in (top, left to right) *Silent Running* (1971), *Dark Star* (1974) and *Alien* (1979); and, closer to home, in *Gravity* (below)



LEAVING THE EARTH BEHIND

'Gravity' director Alfonso Cuarón and the film's visual effects supervisor Tim Webber, of London's Framestore, explain the unique challenges of realising the film's zero-gravity setting

CUTTING THE WIRES

Alfonso Cuarón: Tim believed we should major with CG, but I wanted to do as much as possible practically. We tried conventional rigs, we tried cables... Three hours into the first test it was obvious that approach wasn't going to work. From our first conversation to the start of filming took two and a half years, developing the technologies and experimenting.

Tim Webber: There are two reasons why the traditional wire route wouldn't have worked. Wires work for a short amount of time, but not for a whole movie, or for Alfonso's very long takes, because you can sense that they're there, even on a very highly developed rig. There are also certain moves you just can't do, because the wires get in the way.

AC: Wires pretty much give you movement along one line of axis, but we needed movement along several lines of axis.

TW: Also, the two actors needed to interact with one another in very particular ways: sometimes one would be one way up, sometimes another, and you couldn't do that with wires. Even if we did do it, if you have someone upside down you can see the strain on their face.

AC: In most films set in space there's a three-minute set piece outside in zero gravity, in which there are a lot of cuts, and they're always grabbing something to steady themselves; or the actor floats in space but they're very still and upright.

Chris Nolan did zero gravity in an amazing way in *Inception*, but he did it in a very stylised way. It was not naturalistic or realistic, which is what we needed. He also used hundreds of cuts. You can hide things that way.

The first challenge was just to understand micro-gravity. Our brains are programmed for life on Earth: we understand reality from the standpoint of horizon and weight. Also, you have an expectation of the behaviour of objects based on weight. The behaviour of objects in space is counter-intuitive.

In order to tackle that problem we needed to create pre-vis [pre-visualisation] sequences. Pre-vis's are like animations to sketch out how you will subsequently film something complex. The problems of dealing with zero gravity were apparent right from the



The big bounce: one of the problems in filming *Gravity* was re-creating the complexity of earthlight

pre-vis's. One of the most important things for an animator is to capture weight, the moving of weight from one foot to another as the character walks and so on, and in space there is no weight. I would have my storyboards, and I soon realised that everything was the 'right way up', I had to force myself to do it in a different way. When I passed them to the animators, no matter what they did, eventually everything ended up the right way up. I used to refer to it as the applebox: it looks like we're standing our character on an applebox, and we need to get rid of it and have him float. Eventually the animators got the hang of it, and it became almost second nature.

A NEW TOOLBOX

AC: When I finished the screenplay, the first person I sent it to was [director of photography] Emmanuel Lubezki – we call him Chivo. Chivo said "Why don't we just do it up there in space? We can't do it all, but we could do the scenes in the ISS..." But you do a little research and realise that the whole movie costs less than the passage for one person to space, so at that point the experimentation really started.



Bullock, Clooney and Cuarón

Chris DeFaria, the visual effects executive at Warner Bros., really fought for the CG approach, and eventually I realised he was right, it was the only possibility. Chris thought the actual filming could be done though a very simple approach, all we needed was a grip moving the cameraman around on an office chair, and a dude running around him with a light! We had to indulge him and do a test, and when he saw it he didn't make any further comment.

At the beginning we went to James Cameron and David Fincher for advice. Fincher said "This is great, but you have to wait seven years for the technology to catch up." He was wrong, because it was four and a half! Cameron was very enthusiastic. He said look, the technology is there, you just need to invent your set of tools. You can do it for \$400 million. Well, I'm not James Cameron, so Tim had to do it for a lot less.

TW: Which was probably the biggest challenge!

AC: But in fact the principle of the office chair remained, which was that we would not move the actors, but move the camera and lights around them.

TW: We used many different techniques in different parts of the film, but to a large extent it was to film faces and put them into a CG environment, use CG suits, because it's a lot easier to film a face than the whole body. But you can't turn the actor upside down and around, so you still need to move the camera and the lights, which isn't easy because the lights are so big.

LED LIGHTS

AC: Chivo had a eureka moment when he saw LED lights being used at a Peter Dinklage concert. Chivo is amazing, he's so obsessed by light. If he's talking to you, he's not looking at you, he's looking at how the



light hits you. He was obviously not looking at Peter Gabriel but at the LED lights. Before that we had discussed using rigs that would move the lights super-fast.

TW: We had also discussed building a big circular rig where the light would point at a mirror, and then you could rapidly move the mirror around.

AC: Chivo was obsessed with how light appears in space. It's unlike on Earth, it's unfiltered because there's no atmosphere. He was concerned that the mirror would open the waves of light, in other words diffuse the light like in an atmosphere.

TW: Where it completely fell apart was capturing the bounce light from the Earth. The Earth, if you're in that orbit, is not a little globe, you have light coming from a very wide angle. You can have a light four feet away from the actor, but it would have needed to be 15 feet across to resemble the bounce light from earth, and at that size it just wouldn't have been possible to move around.

AC: The bounce light also depends on where over the Earth you are; if you're over the Pacific it's going to be a cool bounce, but if you're over the Sahara it's going to be a warmer bounce.

TW: We had to work out a system of surrounding the actor with lights on all sides, because the light has to go everywhere, and yet we still needed to be able to get the camera on the actor without the lights being in the way. So we ended up with this adjustable lightbox filled with LEDs – the standard configuration was 10 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet inside. It could be narrower than the 10 feet, because when you wanted to go in close you needed the lights to be closer to the actors.

In its standard configuration there were 1.8 million individual lights, and we could control the brightness and colour of every single one of them. We had to test many different LED bulbs, because there is a problem with flickering with LEDs, and they have an unnatural hue – the spectrum has spikes. We had to compensate for this while also working out how to programme the lights in a way that was flexible, because Chivo would want to make adjustments on set very quickly.

AC: This had a ripple effect back on the pre-vis's we already had. The original idea was that they were just going to inform how we used the rigs when filming. We soon realised that the pre-vis's were more than that. That's something James Cameron told me: he doesn't use them any more as pre-vis's, he uses them as though they're the first carbon painting on a canvas, they're things that you will keep painting on top of. It became very clear that in order to use these technologies we needed to pre-programme stuff, and the pre-vis's would have to be



Hitting the mark: Sandra Bullock, adrift in a lightbox

absolutely precise in terms of camera movements, choreography, compositions, timings and light. So we started making more precise animations, and Chivo started lighting the animations. Most of the lighting was done in the computer.

TW: He would come over and light the film, but in a virtual environment.

AC: The LED lighting technique needs to be developed, but the possibilities for cinema are very exciting, because once you do have the panel, you have a great complexity of colour and lighting. All of the different colours can be projected, and you can't do that with conventional lights because they have usually have one colour. Chivo now is using LEDs on a film by González Iñárritu.

TW: There's one shot where it goes in incredibly closely to Sandra's eyes, and you can see the Earth reflected in her eye. People think we CG'd the Earth on to her eye, but we didn't – it's just the complexity of the lighting reflecting in her eye.

ROBOTIC CAMERAS

AC: As well as the lightbox we used robots mounted on tracks that are used by car manufacturers, but adapted for a camera. In some instances we would have three robots, one which was the camera, one which was the sun light, and a big one with a huge bounce mirror to take the place of the earth.


We had these two-tonne robots on these tracks, travelling super-fast all the way in

to five inches from the face of the actor. The night before shooting started we did a test where we had a dummy in place of the actor and the robot just went wham! Through the head! The scary thing, besides obviously losing our actor, was that all this investment of years and technology, if that didn't work... Obviously we didn't tell Sandra what had happened. When everything worked it was easy, but the whole shoot was like that: one day was great, the next there were major problems.

SANDRA

AC: It was tough for Sandra. But I've never seen a film where the collaboration between actor, director, DP and visual effects person was as close. Sandra would talk as much to Chivo and to Tim as to me. In all of this the actor, usually Sandra, was isolated in the box. It took about 30 minutes to get her into the rig, so between takes she usually chose to stay there.

TW: We tried to make things as easy as possible for her, but it was still incredibly hard. Her ability to hit a mark despite the contraptions she had to be put in. We would say she had to grab something at a certain point, or move some way, and she did it all beautifully fluidly while giving an emotional performance...

AC: It's more like a dancer's choreography; it's about timings more than marks. She was isolated in the lightbox – the communication we had was through the radio and microphone in her space suit. I'm amazed by what she did. 

i The above text comprises edited extracts taken from a Masterclass held at BFI Southbank on 11 October as part of the BFI London Film Festival. The event was hosted by Mark Salisbury

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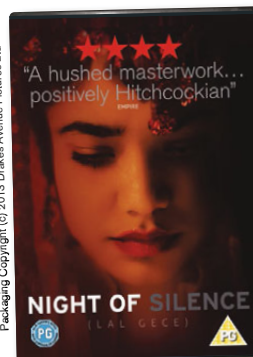
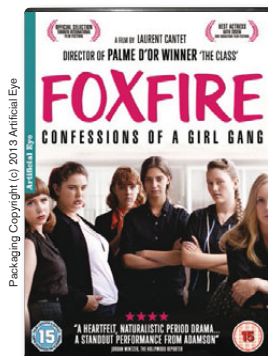
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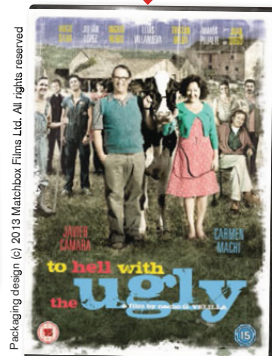
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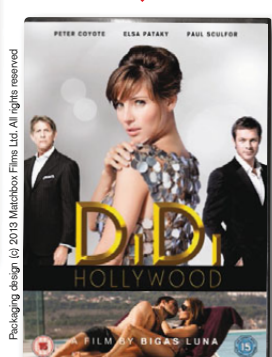


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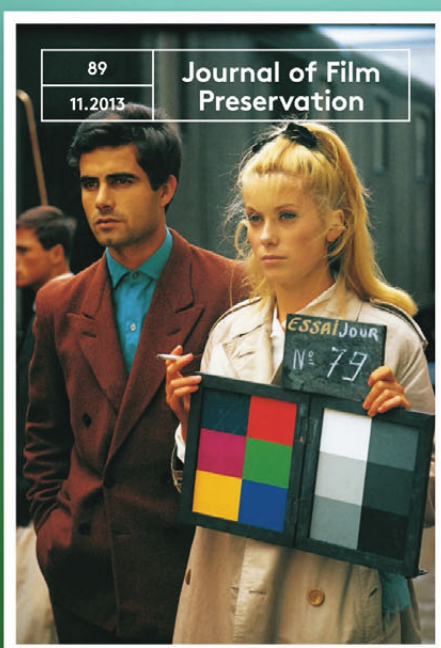
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FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE

Czech and Slovak filmmakers have struggled to capture the reality of 'normalisation' – the repression that followed the Prague Spring. Now a Pole, Agnieszka Holland, has succeeded, in a TV series that begins with the self-immolation of Jan Palach

By Peter Hames

In January 1969, a 20-year-old Czech history student, Jan Palach, set fire to himself in Prague's Wenceslas Square in protest at the occupation of his country by the armies of the Warsaw Pact; he subsequently died of his injuries. Several others followed his example. The August 1968 invasion had initially been met with national resistance, but in the following months despair and lethargy began to descend on Czechoslovakia. Palach's purpose was to rouse the people once more; he also called for strike action and the abolition of censorship.

A number of Czech feature films have dealt with 1968 and the years of repression that followed, but they have often been superficially conceived, and lacking in authentic atmosphere. One of the most successful, Jan Hřebejk's *Pelíšky* (*Cosy Dens*, 1999), set in the months before the Prague Spring, has been criticised on several levels on grounds of authenticity. Since most of the filmmakers who have attempted to re-create the realities of those years were children at the time, this is hardly surprising. Radim Špáček's *Pouta* (*Walking Too Fast*, 2010), set in the 1980s, offers an account of a society infiltrated by the state security more persuasive and chilling than *The Lives of Others* (2006). Václav Kadrnka's Bressonian *Eighty Letters* (*Osmdesát dopisů*, 2011) is another example, a semi-autobiographical account – again set in the 80s – of his mother's encounters with bureaucracy in her attempts to join her husband in the UK.

And now we have Agnieszka Holland's *Burning Bush* (*Horící keř*, 2013), a three-part television series made for HBO Europe, undoubtedly the Czech film and television event of the year. Holland's career has been unusual to say the least, ranging from work with her fellow Pole Andrzej Wajda on *Man of Marble* (*Człowiek z marmaru*, 1976) to collaboration on Kieslowski's *Three Colours* trilogy, and including her own remarkable Polish films, such as *Provincial Actors* (*Aktorzy prowincjonalni*, 1979), *A Lonely Woman* (*Kobieta samotna*, 1981) and *In Darkness* (2011). European arthouse successes such as *Europa Europa* (1990) and *Olivier Olivier* (1992) were followed by her only UK film, a sympathetic adaptation of *The Secret Garden* (1993), a range of films in the USA and Canada, and several episodes of *The Wire* and *Treme* for HBO. But why a Czech film?

The answer is that she has strong Czech and Slovak links. In 2009 she made the Slovak-Polish *Czech Jánošík – A True Story* (*Jánošík – Prawdziwa historia*), about a 17th-century outlaw who is a



THE END OF SPRING
Burning Bush follows the impact of Jan Palach's death, above – on his mother and brother (Jaroslava Pokorná and Petr Stach), above right, and on lawyer Dagmar Burešová and her husband (Tatiana Pauhofová and Jan

Slovak national hero. More to the point, she studied at FAMU, the Prague Film School, which had given birth to the Czechoslovak New Wave of the 1960s, making her diploma film in 1970 and graduating in 1971. In her early twenties she observed and lived through the aftermath of the Prague Spring, and the reconstruction of the atmosphere of the times is impeccable.

The script is by a recent FAMU graduate, Stepán Hulík (born 1984), who constructed the screenplay on the basis of careful research. Slovak involvement comes in the form of a compelling performance by Tatiana Pauhofová in the central role of the lawyer Dagmar Burešová, a future minister of justice after the fall of communism, and Martin Strba's striking cinematography.

Granted the space of a mini-series, Holland is able to develop multiple characters and follow their fates across time, ending with Palach's 'second funeral', when his remains were disinterred and cremated under the supervision of the secret police. The film has been described as a panorama of the Czechoslovakian experience at the beginning of the 'normalisation' era of the 70s and 80s, when the country returned to the role of subservient

Soviet satellite, and all vestiges of the Prague Spring reforms and liberalisation were eliminated. That period, which was to last for 20 years, was characterised by the French poet Louis Aragon as a "Biafra of the spirit". The film contains representations of real people – among them, not only Dagmar Burešová but Palach's mother (Jaroslava Pokorná) and his brother (Petr Stach): it centres on their slander case against Vilém Nový, a Communist MP and member of the party's Central Committee,





who alleged that Palach had acted for 'Western' interests and led an anti-socialist group, and that his death was accidental.

The first episode observes the impact of Palach's act and the investigation of the case by the (fictional) police inspector Major Jireš (Ivan Trojan). Towards the end of the episode Burešová is asked to represent the Palachs in their case against Nový. At first she refuses; but the episode closes with her confronting her own image in a bookshop window. Echoing in the audience's mind is the secret police agent Major Dočekal's disingenuous instruction to Jireš: "The nation is waiting for the truth, so go and find it."

In the second and third episodes, Burešová serves as link and guide through the society and personalities of the time as she searches for information about Nový and for interviewees willing to testify to the nature of his speech. As a result of her work, her husband 'loses' his job as a doctor at the hospital and is forced to work in the provinces (a not uncommon 'punishment').

While Burešová is every inch a professional, her commitment is fundamentally moral – a human responsibility undertaken in the face of overwhelming and irresistible odds. But the Palach affair is only one strand in Holland and Hulík's analysis of a society in crisis. They examine the destructive forces let loose in every individual – the virtual impossibility of acting in accordance with conscience, how to adapt, how to adjust, whether to emigrate (as Major Jireš does), how to continue in a society based on lies, deception, accommodation, and the omnipresent threat of further intervention. (At one stage there were even rumours that the Soviet Union intended to establish direct rule).

The casting is exemplary, with actors who can establish character and attitude in a minimum of screen time.

The film examines the destructive forces let loose in every individual – the virtual impossibility of acting in accordance with conscience in a society based on lies

Almost every character is riven with doubt, faced with problems of decision-making or forced to make decisions with which they don't agree. The issues of trust and doubts about others, which permeated the normalisation years, are foregrounded. Meanwhile, the regime's lackeys remain defeated and/or cynical. As the Czech critic Zdena Škapová notes in the magazine *Film a doba*, Holland invites her actors to "act psychologically, use mere implications, silences, small character gestures".

The first episode of the film presents us with the fact of Jan Palach's martyrdom; the second, which begins a few weeks later with the understated self-immolation of the second 'human torch', Jan Zajíc, is concerned with reactions – of Burešová on the one hand, and of the authorities on the other. The secret police are stationed outside the houses of both the Palach and Bureš families, and Palach's mother is left photographs of her son's body in what has become a case of almost routine intimidation. The final episode is devoted to the trial – and perhaps the remarkable thing is that there was one. Despite the removal of evidence, the case against Nový is demonstrably proven, but the verdict of the court (handed to the judge in an envelope) goes against the Palachs. Jan Palach's grave, which had become a shrine, disappears overnight: "Where is my son?" his mother cries when she finds another headstone in place of his. Yet the film ends 20 years later in January 1989 as leaflets commemorating Palach are distributed in Prague – a week of demonstrations in his memory were a key part of the build-up to the fall of the conformist regime the following November.

Alongside the acting, which constantly reaches beyond overt plot situations to other levels, the film's visual atmosphere remains crucial. This is no conventional retro presentation, though the clothes, food, and constant smoking are deliberate elements. The crumbling stucco of city and village streets, typical of the times, is complemented by empty roads and night-time scenes in which police cars are the only public presence. The visual style is intelligently combined with actuality, both black-and-white and colour – notably Milan Peř's *Silence* (*Ticho*, 1969), recording Palach's funeral, and the 60s documentaries of the 'New Wave' director Evald Schorm. There are echoes of Czech films of the time, particularly Karel Kachyna's *The Ear* (*Ucho*, 1969), with its secret police cars waiting in the street, and Jaromil Jireš's adaptation of Milan Kundera's *The Joke* (*Zert*, 1968), in which the characters visit a restaurant where most of the menu has been cancelled. But it's not a film devoted to references – this is just the portrait of a familiar reality. Throughout, the characters experience one kind of reality while television and press present a false and manipulated one. The bland gaiety of 'popular' music echoes in the background – an incidental reality merging with everyday experience.

Ultimately, *Burning Bush* is a mainstream film – but a clever one. Accessible, with a rapidly moving narrative, it successfully explores the psychology of an era, importantly paying tribute to the example of someone who acted on behalf of his country in the only way that seemed open to him. Though it has significant lines of dialogue – mainly spoken by the authorities – it is important for what it shows rather than what it says. Holland's knowledge of the times in both Poland and Czechoslovakia is put to exemplary use and lifts the generic elements of the television mini-series to a new level.

i All three parts of *Burning Bush* will screen at the Riverside Studios, London, during the Czech Film Festival on 10th November.

PAST MASTERS

When it comes to 1980s period authenticity, Andrew Bujalski's 'Computer Chess' has got it taped, thanks to the magic of old-fashioned video technology: and Bujalski's not alone. Is this return to analogue a symptom of nostalgia, a protest against digital – or something more?

By Calum Marsh

For roughly 45 minutes, Andrew Bujalski's *Computer Chess* sustains the uncanny impression of having been unearthed from somewhere deep within a disused college archive, its unmarked tape perhaps rediscovered after 30 years stored under shadows and an inch-thick layer of dust. The evidence is compelling: it's the early 1980s, and Bujalski, adopting a po-faced mockumentary approach, has conjured the aesthetic favoured by the era's public access television so faithfully that it seems as though the film is being broadcast through time. Indie filmmakers very rarely bother with period pieces, which tend to be exhaustively researched, meticulously tailored down to the smallest detail, and so out of their budgetary league.

Bujalski, with his small crew, evokes the chosen milieu quite creditably, furnishing his gawky computer programmers with the requisite oversized collars and jet-black Wayfarer frames. But he hadn't the resources to home in and excise anachronism with the rigour of, say, *Lincoln* – for which every visible hair and thread was accurately sourced. From that disadvantage Bujalski devised a shrewd workaround: if he couldn't guarantee that everything in front of the camera was appropriate to 1980, he would simply shoot with a camera that was.

The luxury of period verisimilitude comes cheap when your tech does the bulk of the work for you. It's the first thing that strikes you about *Computer Chess* – the thing that plunges you, totally, blindingly, into



PAWN STAR MOUSTACHE
Wiley Wiggins as Martin
Beuscher in *Computer Chess*





the world of 1980 and the world of the fiction. It's the texture of the image: black-and-white, yes, but seductively indistinct, a haze of rock-bottom resolution, every movement a watercolour smear and every light source a halo. Bujalski's longtime cinematographer, Matthias Grunsky, has salvaged the unglamorous Sony AVC-3260 from the dustbin of history, fortuitously stumbling upon three working examples and putting them to use for what is likely the first time in three decades.

The 3260 was at one time a marvel of the modern age: introduced in 1968, this leading-edge vidicon wonder was designed to provide marginally broadcast-quality images to all manner of budget videographers, and became popular among producers of instructional videos or amateur sporting events. Or an event like the one this film takes as its subject: a weekend-long computer chess tournament confined to the conference halls of a cut-rate highway motel, where specialists convene annually in the name of technological progress. Here, rival teams of academic programmers compete to prove the mastery of their machines, supercharged things equipped with custom-made chess-playing algorithms. One gets the sense that the contest is being recorded less for entertainment than for the sake of posterity – history could be made at any moment.

As the weekend progresses and the competition reaches its finale, *Computer Chess* ushers us off into cul-de-sacs of oblique digression, steering away from the banality of the game toward something more surreal. What's remarkable, early on, is the degree of authenticity the 3260 confers: there's something about the specificity of the aesthetic that instantly renders its images convincingly dated. And yet as the fantastic gradually infringes on the ordinary and the seemingly real, the 3260's distinctive look and feel begins to take on stranger qualities: what once recalled the past now brings to mind a sort of dream world, vaguely hypnagogic and not quite real.

Bujalski has been making movies for a little over a decade. Though he is widely regarded as the originator of 'mumblecore', he has resisted the tawdry allure of the consumer-grade digital cinematography favoured by the genre's practitioners, opting instead to shoot his first three features – *Funny Ha Ha* (2002), *Mutual Appreciation* (2005), and *Beeswax* (2009) – on 16mm film. And how did the world respond to this staunch commitment to celluloid? Not so kindly: "People have been asking me for ten years why I still shoot on film," Bujalski told me recently by phone. "People seemed upset about it, as if there were something wrong with shooting on film." His response was characteristically puckish. Well, fine, he thought, if everybody insists that he give up film for video, he'll do precisely that – and the archaic analogue pleasures of *Computer Chess* are the unexpected result.

This is an elegant response to the death of film. As celluloid continues its march into oblivion – increasingly inaccessible to the independent filmmakers who cannot afford it and largely abandoned by the Hollywood filmmakers who can – the divide between the analogue and the digital becomes more pronounced, not only aesthetically but ideologically, too. Every technological sea change has its attendant resistance movement, galvanised by the shock of impending loss, and in the case of cinema the traditionalists are as vocal as their conviction is resolute. These are the purists who swear by the incom-

What's remarkable is the degree of authenticity the Sony AV-3260 confers: there's something about the specificity of the aesthetic that renders its images convincingly dated

parable warmth and flicker of film, Luddites fighting a losing battle against the cold sheen of digital cameras and theatrical DCP. The war splits the film community in two: those who embrace the dazzling binary future and those who resist it vigorously. But *Computer Chess* suggests a third option.

Let us briefly set the stage. The most vaunted promise of the digital cinema was the unprecedented ease of access it could provide. Barriers to entry were to be summarily demolished: where it once cost a would-be filmmaker thousands of dollars to produce even an 8mm short, the low price of digital equipment meant that anybody who could afford, say, a new videogame console could afford to make a movie. You no longer needed to ration film stock like a precious commodity, or send footage overseas to be developed at enormous expense. Even a decade ago, a hopeful film student with a MiniDV camera and a MacBook could shoot a feature after school and edit it to completion over the weekend – and the process has only been simplified since.

This is all well and good, as directors from Joe Swanberg (*Hannah Takes the Stairs*, 2006; *Drinking Buddies*, 2013) to Argentina's Matías Piñeiro (*Viola*, 2012) will doubtless attest. But accessibility has its downsides. For young filmmakers of a certain sensibility, the fact that the digital cinema is readily available to them is precisely what makes it unappealing. Because, after all, if the best thing about the digital cinema is that anybody can make a movie, the worst thing about the digital cinema is that anybody can make a movie. This isn't merely a case of shallow hipster posturing – there's nothing illegitimate in the impulse to be different, to work with materials whose presence seems less suffocatingly universal. The problem is that film itself, despite its rich tradition, does not present itself as a viable alternative, particularly to those whose budget does not exceed three figures.

The dilemma is not unprecedented. The rise of the MP3 in the early 2000s – matched in velocity and interest by the emergence of inexpensive digital recording – disrupted the music industry just as comprehensively as digital technology has disrupted the film industry. The story follows a more or less identical arc. Cash-strapped independent musicians – ie, all independent musicians





– suddenly found that they could forgo nearly every prohibitive expense, sidestepping studio rentals, sound engineers and CD pressings, by recording their music directly to a computer and distributing it online for free. Traditionalists balked: all of this digital music sounded tinny and cold, and anyway, what good is an album if it's being pumped through iPod earphones?

Like celluloid purists, some musicians and listeners retreated into the historical warmth of vinyl, willing themselves into fond regression. The format consequently saw a minor resurgence among bands (and their fans) who could afford the luxury. But releasing an album on vinyl, like shooting on film, is expensive – so that for many independent musicians the option is hardly feasible. A curious trend appeared in response: bands began releasing cassettes. An emblem of self-conscious antiquation, and disreputably shoddy even at the height of its popularity, the cassette represented an ideal object of ironic reappropriation, seized upon and reclaimed after 20 years banished to obsolescence. The romance of vinyl had always been predicated on object fetishism – what people really yearned for, what they lacked in the digital era, was physicality. And cassettes offered it at a fraction of the price.

REWINDING HISTORY

7 September 2013 was informally dubbed 'Cassette Store Day' across the United States and the UK, following the lead of the popular annual 'Record Store Day', when music fans gather to celebrate independent record stores. Dozens of bands released new music or re-released old music on cassette in a show of analogue solidarity, among them Haim, Deerhunter, the Flaming Lips, and Animal Collective. Local cassette-only labels buy tapes in bulk for ten pence each, hand-dubbing runs of 50 or 100 albums and selling them for a fiver each after bands play a bar or club. At a time when it has never been easier or cheaper to record and distribute new music, these bands are making an active show of time and effort. The cassette comes to signify something strange and compelling: it is a reminder of the endurance of the physical at a time when most don't seem to care.

I find it doubtful that indie filmmakers will soon embrace VHS or BetaMax as an alternative mode of distribution, however intensely DCP and VOD come to be despised. But a movement of comparable retro-fetishism is already on the horizon: analogue video as a shooting format will return once again, restored to more than its for-



mer glory, savoured for precisely those qualities which make it unsightly and conspicuously obsolete. *Computer Chess* proves that there remains something deeply appealing about the texture of the video image, something defamiliarising in the union of the lurid and the lo-fi. Certainly, this is an appeal informed largely by nostalgia: our acute awareness that these images belong in some sense to history seems to animate their intrigue, imbuing ordinary objects with a sensation of the strange. It's a punkish impulse. The market drives technology toward constant rejuvenation, encouraging us to see the value in this year's model – seeking out the obsolete disrupts a system founded on planned obsolescence, where we're we need to see the world in higher and higher definition.

Computer Chess, of course, is not the first film of its kind to turn toward analogue video, though it may be the most prominent to date. Pablo Larrain shot his film *No*, which premiered in the Directors' Fortnight section of the Cannes film festival last year, using a Sony U-matic video camera from the early 1980s, intended to approximate the look of the Chilean television in the era during which the film is set. Harmony Korine's *Trash Humpers* (2009), was shot on lo-res analogue video, and the texture of the image heightens a sense of the nightmarish and surreal. In all three pictures, the content explains the use of video: *Trash Humpers* and *Computer Chess* present themselves as documentaries in which characters chose to make use of this particular equipment, while *No* is a period piece set in a TV studio portrayed by a camera appropriate to the time and place. In each case the aesthetic, however peculiar, is justified by narrative circumstance.

The final step in the realisation of this burgeoning trend is the separation of form and content – or in other words, we need to see analogue video used arbitrarily. In the same way that musicians do not feel compelled to justify their use of cassette tapes by making period-appropriate music, filmmakers should feel free to use video as an expressive tool, an aesthetic decision no different than shooting in an academy ratio or in black and white. The industry speaks often of the possibilities offered by digital cinematography, but it's important to remember that the limitations of the technology offer possibilities of their own: they encourage the expansion and nurturing of alternatives – even those which perhaps seemed hopelessly obsolete.



Computer Chess is released on 22 November and is reviewed on page 70

SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLES
Robin Schwartz as sole female contender Shelly Flintic, above left, and Patrick Riester as Peter Bishton, above right. Opposite, Wiley Wiggins, Riester and Bert Herigstad as Luke



TWO'S COMPANY
Blue Is the Warmest Colour
is underpinned by blistering
performances from Adèle
Exarchopoulos as the
heroine Adèle, left, and
Léa Seydoux as her older
lover, art student Emma



WOMEN IN LOVE

Abdellatif Kechiche's 'Blue Is the Warmest Colour' has caused no small amount of controversy since winning the Palme d'Or in Cannes – not least because of a perceived male slant to its depiction of a lesbian love affair. But, says the director, you might as well tell him he has no right to film the life of an airline pilot because he can't fly

By Jonathan Romney

When **Abdellatif Kechiche's** fifth feature *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* (*La Vie d'Adèle, Chapitre 1 & 2*) competed in Cannes this year, the critical reaction was, for the most part, unconditional passion. The film widely inspired a *coup de foudre* – love at first sight – not unlike the sort that kicks in on a Lille street between heroine Adèle (the extraordinary, affecting newcomer Adèle Exarchopoulos) and blue-haired art student Emma (Léa Seydoux) with whom she soon embarks on a passionate relationship. A three-hour film from an acclaimed practitioner of French realism, with long and explicit sex sequences, Kechiche's film was predestined to make a splash in competition, but no one expected quite the enthusiasm it elicited from viewers and from Steven Spielberg's jury, which awarded it the Palme d'Or.

Based loosely on *Le Bleu est une couleur chaude*, a 2010 graphic novel by Julie Maroh, *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* comes across as the tentative first act of a biography. It is a *Bildungsroman* about a young woman's social and sexual education, beginning with her first uneasy sexual experience with a boy; through her meeting with Emma and their subsequent passionate relationship; to their break-up and its aftermath. By the end, Adèle is established in a teaching career and apparently strengthened by love and loss, in the last shot walking away from the camera towards a potential Chapter 3 (a possibility that Kechiche hasn't ruled out).

It's hard not to be affected by the drama's fierce intensity, and by Kechiche's method of stretching out into vivid depictions of people's everyday lives, as seen in his 2003 youth drama *L'Esquive* and his 2007 ensemble piece about Sète's North African community *Couscous* (*La Graine et le Mulet*). Several scenes in *Blue* are emotionally intense to an astonishing degree, brilliantly and viscerally performed: notably the break-up scene, with emotions appearing to run so high for the actresses themselves that Seydoux comes out in blotches and Exarchopoulos's face streams with snot and tears.

In a more restrained register are the early scenes of flirtatious courtship, with Emma particularly winning with her relaxed mixture of cheek, amusement and tenderness as she sounds out her gauche potential partner. It's the best we've yet seen from Seydoux, who has established herself as a linchpin of French cinema



WAR OF WORDS

Director Abdellatif Kechiche (right) has faced accusations from his lead actresses (below) that the shoot was a 'horrible experience', during which he shouted at them and told Seydoux to slap her co-star

over several years (from Sébastien Lifshitz's 2009 *Plein sud*, through Benoît Jacquot's *Farewell, My Queen* in 2012, to her other 2013 Cannes hit, Rebecca Zlotowski's *Grand Central*). I'd also single out in *Blue* the extraordinary moment in which Kechiche again shows his brilliance, seen in *L'Esquive*, at directing young non-professionals in ensemble scenes, as Adèle's schoolmates round on her in homophobic rage.

So am I at risk of presenting *Blue* as a selection of highly potent scenes, rather than as an effective whole? If so, then admittedly that's how it came across to me on a second viewing, during which its flaws became apparent. *Blue* doesn't have the organic completeness of either *L'Esquive* or *Couscous*, and there are moments that begin to look narratively or psychologically questionable: powerful as it is, the break-up now felt abrupt and less plausible. There are other moments that rankle, notably the lovers' visit to an art gallery where they appreciatively contemplate a collection of female nudes in painting and sculpture: here the film seems gauche to be declaring, "Behold – the mystery of women's bodies and desire!" Also ungainly is Emma's birthday party, attended by her somewhat pretentious middle-class friends. It should be said that while Kechiche has an unerring touch for, and empathy with, working-class characters (in *L'Esquive* and *Couscous*), his attitude to the bourgeoisie can come across as amused indulgence. Emma's parents, beaming about "Good food... wine and culture", come across as caricaturally smug, and the same is true of the party, where a male gallerist muses over the story of Tiresias and the mystery of whether the female orgasm is truly better than the male.

Yet overall, there's no denying that *Blue* is a film of remarkable force, and an extremely affirmative one. It takes us through the experience of a strong, intelligent, sexually and intellectually independent young woman, and makes us feel we've lived through it with her. By the end, we feel a connection with Adèle that testifies to

Kechiche's success in dispensing with the distancing effects that we're usually aware of when we watch cinema. As he says in his interview (see below), he wants his films not just to resemble life, but to be life – which he achieves partly through a style that privileges tight close-ups on characters' faces, and a brisk editing style.

Despite its acclaim in Cannes, *Blue* has also caused bitter controversy. A French film technicians' union attacked Kechiche's working methods on set, complaining that they were disorganised, excessively demanding and bordering on "moral harassment". In his defence, Kechiche has explained that his filming style is hard for non-initiates to accept: it involves keeping the camera rolling for long periods without cutting, shooting sequences that are not necessarily intended to go in the finished film, and shooting scenes only when he and the actors are in the right mood, rather than following a strict schedule. Some French journalists defended an auteur's prerogative: roughly speaking, if Kechiche's methods make him a nightmare mixture of von Stroheim, Hitchcock and Pialat, then *tant pis*, the proof is in the Palme.

Then Seydoux and Exarchopoulos claimed in interviews that the shoot was a "horrible" experience, that Kechiche shouted at them, told Seydoux to slap her co-star and at one point to lick her snot. Kechiche made his own rejoinders about how Seydoux in particular and actors in general were just too pampered.

The film's content has been no less controversial. What's caused a stir is Kechiche's depiction of lesbian sexuality in general, and in particular the sex scenes, which show Adèle and Emma enjoying a vigorous erotic life: *l'amour fou* at its sweatiest. Since we're still not used to seeing unrestrained images of bedroom activity in mainstream art cinema, and certainly not at any length (*Blue*'s first sex scene lasts ten minutes), viewers are often at a loss to know how to respond; there's often a knee-jerk tendency among critics to distance themselves by claiming that the sex in a particular film is boring, or by



simply saluting the audacity of the performers.

My first reaction to the sex in *Blue* was amazement that the scenes were so long and so explicit, the actresses seeming to throw themselves unabashed into kissing, scissoring and cunnilingus. But all this seemed perfectly to fit with the overall drama: throughout the film, Adèle and Emma are shown following their own paths in life, pursuing careers, defending their political beliefs at demos, having fun, enjoying great sex. All this seemed in every way a more positive presentation of female sexuality than François Ozon's ludicrous 2013 Cannes contender *Jeune & jolie* (see page 48), about a cartoonishly glamorous teenager embarking on a sexual odyssey involving prostitution with older men, all to make a hackneyed point about transgressive desire.

I have to admit, though, that on a second viewing of *Blue*, I was less convinced by the sex, which seemed to put inordinate emphasis on buttock-grabbing and gasping, as if the actresses were playing largely to the conventions of porn (Kechiche has said that he concentrated on lighting these scenes to make them beautiful, and let the erotic 'choreography' take care of itself). Nevertheless Kechiche's purpose, I think, is to make the sex as important as, but no more important than, other key factors of Adèle's life, notably her progress as a school-teacher, her unease at adapting to middle-class Emma's arty circle, or her love of literature (Pierre de Marivaux's 18th-century novel *La Vie de Marianne* is a key text, with the film staging classroom debates on this and the poetry of Francis Ponge).

Not everyone, however, has been won over by *Blue*'s depictions of lesbian sexuality and lifestyle. Julie Maroh, author of the graphic novel, blogged that she found these aspects of the film unconvincing, and doubted whether there were actually any lesbians on set. Manohla Dargis in the *New York Times* commented that Kechiche seemed uninterested in or unaware of the history of feminist debate on the representation of women's bodies. Conversely, B. Ruby Rich, a veteran theorist of queer cinema, enthused, "*Blue* carries the female coming of age film into historic new territory." (By the way, Kechiche is not the first male director to attempt a serious depiction of lesbian sexuality: cf John Sayles's *Lianna*, 1983, and Karoly Makk's *Another Way*, 1982).

So is the film exploitative, or intrusive – and is Kechiche out of his depth? There is also the question that hovers over any explicit depiction of sexual activity on screen: is the camera intrusive on the actors, or on the characters? And there is the difficulty of stating with certainty whether a filmmaker can be suspected of titillating the audience: arousal can be triggered intentionally, but it can also come about in a misplaced way, in the case of sex scenes whose erotic charge inappropriately dynamites a film's coherence.

Here, I can only offer my personal response: as a heterosexual male (and I'll confess, one who's always had a soft spot for Léa Seydoux), not only did I not find *Blue*'s sex scenes arousing, but I felt that the stakes of the drama – the knowledge that we were watching a privileged moment in the evolving relationship of two women – meant that I was aware of an implicit 'back off' sign, telling me that I could watch but that I couldn't get too invested. I suspect that not all heterosexual men will feel this way; in any case, viewers will bring their own



sexual, and cinematic, orientations to bear (the *Independent* carried a story of viewers bursting into laughter at the London Film Festival screening – perhaps the predictable British response).

The debate over *Blue* may rage for some time, or may fizzle out – I suspect that the film will, with time, be seen as a less substantial achievement than Kechiche's *Couscous*. Even so, *Blue* is still an immensely moving and provocative achievement. And it presents us with a nexus of fraught questions, reminding us as too few contemporary films do that cinema is worth arguing about because it relates to the way people live, and love, and see themselves.

Jonathan Romney: What are you looking for in the kind of realism you pursue?

Abdellatif Kechiche: I don't like the word 'realism'. You can talk about realist painting, but realist cinema – that would imply that there's an artifice used to obtain realism. I'd rather talk about a cinema of truth rather than of reality.

I don't want [my cinema] to resemble life. I want it to be life. I want there to be real moments of life in my films.

JR: You had two points of departure for the film – the Julie Maroh *bande dessinée*, but before that, an idea you'd had about a female teacher.

Blue presents us with a nexus of fraught questions, reminding us as too few contemporary films do that cinema is worth arguing about

'Some actors have a shell around them, which we all have in life. But for me to work, they have to accept that shell being broken'

BACK CATALOGUE
Blue Is the Warmest Colour perhaps doesn't have the organic completeness of Kechiche's 2003 drama *L'Esquive* (below) and may prove a less substantial achievement than his 2007 film *Couscous* (bottom)

AK: I'd written a script on that topic, but it wasn't really working for me. Then I read the graphic novel, and things started working themselves out in my imagination. In the beginning I'd wanted to address the difficulty of two people having a relationship when they're from different social milieus – quite independently of sexual identity. Then that became less important, and I realised how much I was attached to the character of Adèle. I wanted to know her, to discover her intimate being. She absolutely became a heroine for me – I totally admired her courage, her freedom of spirit, her devotion to others.

When I met Adèle [Exarchopoulos], I felt that she could be the ideal heroine – that's why the character ended up with her name. Right from the start, I could imagine a total fusion between the character and the actress.

JR: What about the editing process? Is the rumour true that on this shoot you ended up with 750 hours of footage?

AK: No, it was maybe a third of that – which is already a lot. I like to let the camera roll, and use the clapperboard as little as possible so as to not spoil the tension on set – as soon as you shout 'Cut!' people go to the loo, have a drink, make phone calls. So I don't cut, but I might stop and talk to the actors, then say, 'Positions', and we shoot right away. Or I might just stay on set for three-quarters of an hour doing absolutely nothing – but once we shoot, we shoot.



What I don't like is having things worked out beforehand. If I have a film all worked in advance, with a storyboard and a continuity person who maps it out minute by minute, I don't feel I'm being creative. Whenever I've done that, it's felt lifeless, there's no density. So I've ended up accepting my own rhythm, and this idea of letting the film impose itself on me – letting it guide me.

As soon as the shoot is over, I know what the film will be. There are lots of scenes that I don't even look at in the edit – I shoot them, but they're not actually useful for the viewer, they're just lived moments and they can be very useful for the actors.

JR: How did the casting of the two leads work? You had Léa Seydoux cast a long time before Adèle Exarchopoulos came along, so did there need to be a perfect fit between them?

AK: I needed there to be a possibility of attraction between the two actresses, but in any case, that's something you have to create. I admired Adèle so much that I thought Léa couldn't be indifferent to her. In fact, Léa didn't agree at all – she couldn't see Adèle as the character, she rejected her totally. But I said, it's her or no one.

JR: What's your response to criticism that you're out of your depth depicting a lesbian relationship?

AK: I find that absolutely hollow, it's like saying a man has no right to depict a woman, or a woman's emotion, because his view would be flawed. As if only a woman could use the word 'I' in talking about a woman. Take Marivaux's novel *The Life of Marianne* – over 600 pages, he uses the first person singular to talk about his heroine, to get inside her psyche. If I identify with my characters and they're female, I don't see the injustice in that.

It's really dangerous to enclose homosexuality in a category of special, distinct beings – that's where racism starts. Does it mean I can't talk about love between two people who are Arab, or African or Asian because they love each other differently? Do two women love each other differently from two men, or a man and a woman? Is a man's sensibility absolutely different from a woman's? Don't they both experience sorrow, love, tenderness, revolt, anger?

JR: How do you respond to the suggestions that the sex scenes were intrusive, or shot from a male point of view?

AK: It's not illegal. As a filmmaker, I assume the right to do it, and if people aren't happy, too bad. It's like saying I don't have the right to film the life of an airline pilot. Sexuality is a secondary thing. As for being shot from a male point of view, I find that really empty. We're talking about love – it's absolute, it's cosmic.

JR: How did you work with your actors to get their performances to such a point of physical intensity, for example in the break-up scene?

AK: It requires a certain investment from the actor. Some actors really go for that and find it easy to achieve, others feel a resistance or refuse it outright, because they have a shell around them, which we all have in life. But for me to work, they have to accept that shell being broken. Anyway [the actors I work with] know that that's where I'm heading, and they have to think carefully about whether that's what they want or not.

I didn't have to push [Adèle and Léa] into what they had to do. They set themselves a challenge by accepting the parts.

i Blue Is the Warmest Colour is released in the UK on 22 November and is reviewed on page 60

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An abstract painting set to a *musique concrète* soundtrack, an ocean-going 'Le Sang des bêtes', a 'Moby-Dick' for trawlermen – 'Leviathan' is both a documentary about the fishing industry, and something far more rich and strange

By Trevor Johnston

ALL AT SEA

What fresh hell is this, anyway? Amid enveloping, galactic darkness, pinpoints of light illuminate an ocean-going slaughterhouse. There are men in hoods and gore-stained overalls, the glint and swish of blades, piscine victims flapping and gasping for air. An outlet spews blood and backwash into the sea, while a metallic cacophony of grinding winches and insistent, infernal engine noise radiates out into the night. Welcome to the New Bedford chain-net massacre...

Tempting as it is to play up the horror movie aspects of Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel's *Leviathan* – a viscerally potent, visually startling picture of life aboard an Atlantic trawler, which stretches documentary form as far as it will go – this joint venture from two Harvard anthropologists-turned-film-makers has much more than sheer shock value on its mind. Then again, the comparisons between horror and documentary aren't altogether fatuous either, since both strands of cinematic endeavour aim to access the deepest, darkest truths about man and his environment. Both are about looking at the things we may not necessarily want to confront. In the case of *Leviathan*, how much do you really want to know about the lives and the processes behind the skate wing on your restaurant table, or those plump, de-coralled scallops nestling shrink-wrapped in your upscale supermarket?

That said, billing the film as some sort of conscience-tugging industrial exposé is far from the whole story either. It's slippery, this one. Slippery as the bug-eyed, silver-scaled denizens of the deep, cascading out of the trawl nets as the fishermen unload their oceanic haul. This makes it understandable that Lucien Castaing-Taylor is initially somewhat circumspect about discussing it, when we meet at the Edinburgh Film Festival in June just before he takes the stage to pick up the event's Michael Powell Award for the best new British feature (the film qualifying as a France-US-UK co-production). "There's a whole genre of people reciting what filmmakers say about their own films, so it just becomes propaganda," reckons the Liverpool-born director of Harvard University's Sensory Ethnography Lab, a centre for PhD research which has recently been building up its own provocative and illuminating filmography. "Directors reel off the same clichés again and again, making it easier for the critic or viewer to engage with what the filmmaker says rather than with the film itself."

He is correct to lodge such a caveat, especially since – it's hard to overstress the point – *Leviathan*'s singular-

ity is best appreciated the less you know going in. That's certainly the spirit in which Castaing-Taylor and his co-director Paravel approached their Atlantic shoot, which unfolded over six separate trips out of New Bedford, Massachusetts (former whaling capital and port of embarkation for Ishmael in Melville's *Moby-Dick*), amassing some 250 hours of footage in a total of two months at sea. The project had actually started with the notion of depicting the complex realities of modern commercial fishing by filming the associated industry built up around it portside, but all that changed when the duo took their video camera out with the trawlermen for the first time – and then lost it to the waves.

"We don't really do that standard location-scouting thing," explains Castaing-Taylor, best-known as a filmmaker for the 2009 doc *Sweetwater*, an elegiac pastoral about the last sheep-herding run in Montana. "Maybe it's because we're anthropologists, we have a sense that we're doing research with the camera rather than before the camera. You have to respond to this stuff as it happens, and once we'd been out to sea everything we shot was so scary and weird and so much less familiar than anything we'd got on land, we couldn't see how to use any of that prior material without undermining the inherent exoticism of the stuff on the boat."

SHOOTING FISH (NOT IN A BARREL)

On the credits of *Sweetgrass*, Castaing-Taylor listed himself as 'recorder', yet the new film takes that functional notion and turns it inside out. What's remarkable about *Leviathan* is how filmmakers' consumer DSLRs and tiny GoPro digital cameras – the kind dangerous sports practitioners attach to their helmets and handlebars – respond to the extreme environment of floodlit decks and churning seas, the equipment's struggle to record the challenging conditions turning out images closer to abstract painting than recognisable reportage. Waves and skies, fish and fowl, man and machine, they all come at us in a dizzying swirl, given a further level of sensory overload by a *musique concrète* soundtrack mix which blends higher-res field recordings and the digital distortions created by the cameras' tiny, overworked built-in mikes. Frequently, it takes us time to figure out just what it is we're seeing, and as we work towards the realisation that the camera is actually skimming just under the surf, or sloshing inside the pen with the still-breathing catch, the unexpected perspectives definitely require and reward an active viewer.



SEA FEVER
Leviathan co-directors Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel, top, with images from the film – blood pouring from an outlet, and seagulls following the trawler



To some extent, all this reflects the sheer grind of the shoot for Castaing-Taylor and Paravel – keeping the same 20 hours on/4 hours off sleeping-pattern adopted by a hard-pressed crew fiercely labouring to monetise their time at sea, then trying to respond creatively while at the limits of their own physical endurance. Each trip brought him a 48-60 hour bout of seasickness, while she paid the price of hanging over the side to get certain shots by putting her back out so badly that hospital treatment was necessary. But whether they were manoeuvring their cameras on the end of 15-foot jury-rigged sticks in darkness and high seas, or attaching them to crew members' clothing and headgear for an intimate POV of the sheer toil of shucking scallops, for much of the time Castaing-Taylor and Paravel, perhaps surprisingly, relinquished a degree of control over what was being filmed.

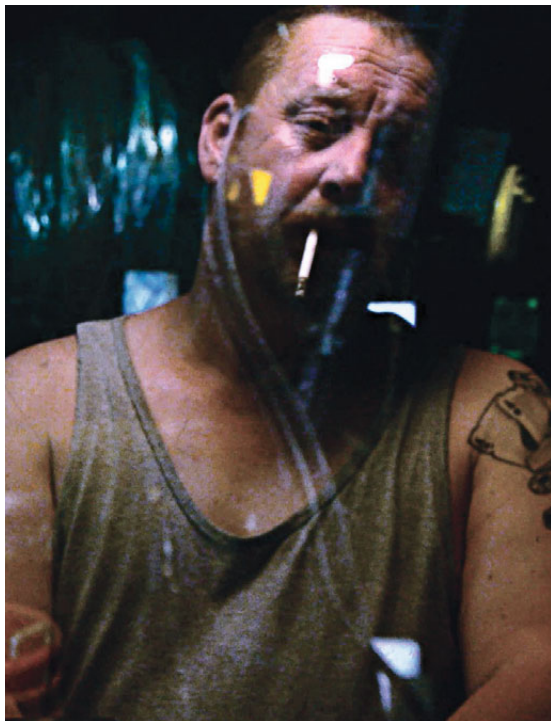
“Narrative fiction filmmaking isn’t nearly as ossified as documentary, but they’re both pretty conventional in giving you establishing shots and allowing the viewer to begin to piece together the space and time being constructed by the sequence of shots,” Castaing-Taylor says. “We basically scupper that by throwing the viewer into the anarchy of the fisherman’s experience, giving you this out-of-body experience of looking at something in a way that no human would necessarily look at it.”

Because you weren’t actually looking at it?

“Yes, you pick up a long pole which had a camera attached to it six hours earlier, and you can’t remember which way up the camera was. You stick it underwater, you end up holding it in the air, but you can’t see the viewfinder. You’re filming with your soul, with your body, and the images feel embodied because they’re without any cinematic consciousness or intentionality. Even with the most grainy *cinéma vérité* as it zooms in and out, you’re still aware of that intentionality. Here, what you’re seeing is unfamiliar, because it’s at once hyper-subjective and at the same time with a species of objectivity really different from the usual documentary representation. In the end, it goes beyond the human perspective.”

His words suggest just why *Leviathan* feels unlike anything you’ve ever seen before, as removed from rigorous portraits of work and industry like Michael Glawogger’s *Workingman’s Death* and Nikolaus Geyrhalt’s *Our Daily Bread* (both 2005) as it is from Fred Wiseman’s exhaustive institutional chronicles or the formally conceived landscape cinema of a James Benning. The film is distinct from other maverick offerings, while also working against the grain of





documentary conventions such as readable locations and identifiable characters. It sees Castaing-Taylor pushing into fresh formal territory after *Sweetgrass* and leaves Paravel's first feature *Foreign Parts* (2010) – about auto-spares traders in Queens, New York, as the area braces itself for redevelopment – looking conventional. Even so, the ethnographic element of those two earlier films, which fulfil their remit of recording a social situation about to be erased by so-called progress, is still in evidence in *Leviathan*. Radical construction notwithstanding, it also bears traces of the same 'recordist' impulse, as we follow the crew-members labouring away at the very sharp end of the market economy, serving a mode of brute industrial ecological plunder that seems unsustainable in the long term. Castaing-Taylor and Paravel may not go in for on-screen statistics and sentimental button-pushing, but their empathy with their subject matter, human, aquatic or avian, is still apparent.

NEWS OF THE SEMI-POST-NATURAL WORLD

How then, to square the spontaneous, in-the-moment response with the preconceived design, to balance the relinquishing of intentionality with a certain broadly ideological point of view?

Paravel ponders the question in a Skype chat from her new base in Paris, where she's hoping to set up a European outpost of the Sensory Ethnography Lab: "There was certainly an idea before we went on the boat of finding a way to share the film with our subject, in a way we'd never done before. That was the preconceived element, then using the small cameras allowed us to move more easily between them and us, to decentre our own presence as filmmakers, so the audience would lose their bearings. That's about recreating our experience on the boat, our relationship to the ocean and nature, but what also mattered was to portray that marginalised community, the fishermen, in a way which they themselves would recognise – and they did, they watched it on the boat."

So after the whole unpredictable adventure of making the film and trying to bring those ideas into play, you still feel *Leviathan* has a unified sense of purpose?

"Film should restore us to the world," maintains Paravel, who sensed that she and Castaing-Taylor were on to something after Claire Denis, visiting Harvard to show *35 Shots of Rum*, responded very positively to an early assembly. "Conventional journalistic documentary imposes a point of view, it forces information on us, its grammar claims to have some privileged relationship to the world, but it actually takes us away from the magnitude of what is in front of us. What we're trying to do is give a more direct experience which throws the viewer back into the world, back into reality."

Castaing-Taylor's take: "It's about evoking human existence in such a way that humanity has a more humble relationship with the larger cosmological semi-post-natural world that we all inhabit. The humans are off-screen for quite a time, but when we get back to them, we look at them as if they were animals or fish or reptiles."

The source of *Leviathan*'s rich fascination, however, may well be its multiplicity of contradictions. A film that's somehow subjective and objective at once, authentic yet abstract, controlled but accidental. One that gives the viewer freedom to arrive at a point the filmmakers have to some extent predetermined. Both Castaing-Taylor and Paravel resist other cinematic comparisons – "we are not really cinephiles," she says, "so we're not trapped by allegiance to another genre or film" – pointing instead to the fundamental inspiration of Melville's multifaceted, uncategorisable *Moby-Dick*, whose grandiose, oneiric, confounding form still looms large here.

"The *Leviathan* is actually everywhere," concludes Paravel. "It's the men, the boat, the film itself. The whole film's a monster, which is maybe why no one can quite classify it."



Leviathan is released in UK cinemas on 29 November, and on DVD and Blu-ray on 9 December

'Conventional journalistic documentary imposes a point of view... What we're trying to do is give a more direct experience which throws the viewer back into the world, back into reality'

NET GAINS

One of the unnamed fishermen, top left, aboard the unnamed trawler, top right, in *Leviathan*.

REALM OF THE SENSORY

'Leviathan' is the latest in a line of adventurous documentaries from Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab that set out to experience the real world, not just talk about it

By Trevor Johnston

In 2006, the Visual and Environmental Studies department at Harvard University joined with their colleagues in Anthropology to launch the Sensory Ethnography Lab (SEL), which, under the direction of *Leviathan* co-director Professor Lucien Castaing-Taylor, provides facilities and support for the Media Anthropology PhD course. Since then, projects generated by staff and students alike have traversed gallery spaces, film festivals and commercial distribution worldwide, a stream of documentary features, shorts and installations (both video and audio) exploring new ways to register specific spheres of human experience and interactivity. "We are definitely, like anthropologists, invested in the real world and the vagaries and different varieties of lived experiences and cultures," explains Castaing-Taylor. "But we're interested in working with documentary in ways that pulls away from its affinity with broadcast journalism and talking heads to discuss the world rather than experiencing it. Even though we're working against conventional narrative structures, I think our works have a lot more affinity with cinema as a whole rather than just straight-up documentary."

His words are borne out by his own 2009 documentary feature *Sweetgrass*, co-directed with Ilisa Barbash, which followed the last-ever sheep-drive through the Montana mountains, playing long-take pastoral calm against the keenly observed anti-mythology of the 21st-century cowboy. A similar blend of intent watchfulness and character-infused narrative also marks 2010's *Foreign Parts*, the first feature by course lecturer Véréna Paravel (Castaing-Taylor's collaborator on *Leviathan*), which chronicles the outsider community of auto-parts traders in a desolate enclave of Queens, New York, now awaiting the redevelopers' wrecking-ball. The more conventional elements of both titles, traces of portraiture and contextualising captions, are no longer apparent however, in the more formally audacious environment of *Leviathan*. That experimental impetus is reflected in the works their students have presented.

Former PhD candidate J.P. Sniadecki, co-director on *Foreign Parts* and now resident



In redevelopment hell: *Foreign Parts*

in China, adopted a high-risk single-shot strategy on his 2012 feature *People's Park*: the finished 75-minute cut was drawn from the 19th attempt he and then Yale student Libbie Dina Cohn made to wheel their camera round a park in Chengdu, offering a forensic insight into Chinese society by capturing ordinary citizens at their leisure. A key ethnographic theme, the relationship between the observer and the observed, is played out in the way the locals alternately play to and ignore the lens, an aspect also teasingly present in the most recent SEL feature, *Manakamana*, a double prize-winner in Locarno last August. Teaching fellows Stephanie Spray and Pacho Velez placed their 16mm camera inside a cable car ascending and descending from the eponymous temple in the foothills of Nepal, framing diverse passengers making the trip to deliver an immersive, cumulatively hypnotic reflection on the passage of time and technology, and the indeed transportive qualities of cinema itself. A unique and memorable encounter.



Manakamana

The five features surveyed here though, are only part of the wider list of SEL projects. Both Castaing-Taylor and Paravel, for instance, have also exhibited in galleries, the former often repurposing footage from the *Sweetgrass* and *Leviathan* shoots for installation viewing. Ernst Karel, course manager and assistant director, is also an indispensable part of the operation, an artist, musician and recording engineer who's not only supervised the sound mix on all the features, but created his own roster of vivid audio-only works, including *Materials Recovery Facility* and *Swiss Mountain Transport Systems*. In the wake of *Leviathan*'s breakout profile, the SEL brand has now become an attractive programming package for film festivals (most recently RIDM in Montreal and the 2013 Viennale), hopefully creating a momentum that will encourage them towards further creative enterprise. With Castaing-Taylor and Paravel now engaged on an array of tantalising projects, including a post-Fukushima shoot in Japan, it certainly looks that way. 📺



Sweetgrass

LOVE FOR SALE

François Ozon's latest film, *'Jeune & jolie'*, is a cool, provocative blend of teen coming-of-age drama and *'Belle de jour'*, overlaid with a Françoise Hardy soundtrack. Ozon talks about sex, money and the modern teenager

By Nick Roddick

A unique (and uniquely French) mix of showman and auteur, François Ozon specialises in immaculately lit, gorgeously framed pictures of a bourgeois world beneath whose glowing surface there is (usually) a lot more going on than is at first apparent. Nowhere is this more true than in his latest, *Jeune & jolie*, which coolly observes the 'hot' topic of teenage prostitution. Initially intriguing and perhaps a little shocking (being a provocateur comes naturally to Ozon), *Jeune & jolie*, viewed a second time, yields up multiple intricacies and hidden depths. It is a film so cleverly constructed one longs to take it apart to see how it works.

Jeune & jolie belongs firmly in the 'bourgeois family' category of Ozon's work, along with *Dans la maison* (*In the House*, 2012), *5x2* (2004), *Swimming Pool* (2002) and *Sous le sable* (*Under the Sand*, 2000): one of the films with Charlotte Rampling rather than one of the campy melodramas, like *Huit femmes* (*8 Women*, 2001) and *Potiche* (2010), he has made with Catherine Deneuve.

The film's structure is also ambitious, determined thematically as much as narratively, with excursions into the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud and an interesting use of music (four songs by Françoise Hardy, a French cultural icon, who is used much as Swedish cultural icons Abba are used by Lukas Moodysson in *Together*, 2000). Another obvious reference point is Buñuel's *Belle de jour* (1967), with which it shares the theme of a rich woman 'voluntarily' becoming a prostitute. But to me it seems much closer in theme (though clearly not in style) to Godard's *Vivre sa vie* (1962), with its emphasis on the anonymity and transactional nature of the (very graphic) sexual encounters: you get to see a lot of 100-euro notes.

Taking place over four seasons from summer to spring, *Jeune & jolie* records a year in the life of the 'young and beautiful' heroine Isabelle, played by model Marine

Vacth. Summer sees 17-year-old Isabelle losing her virginity to a hunky young German on the beach; come autumn, she has created a second identity as high-class (and highly paid) call-girl Léa; in winter, her two worlds collide.

Jeune & jolie is not really about teenage prostitution, however: it is more about a young woman leaving one life (childhood) and entering another, where she needs to explore and define her sexuality beyond the reach of her parents' help – and, in particular, beyond their understanding. Slyly, Ozon compares the film with Claude Pinoteau's mainstream coming of age comedy *La boum* (1980). But there are comparatively few laughs.

'Summer' ends with the family driving away from the beach, passing en route the German boy on his bicycle, who fades into the distance behind the car. Ozon can be very literal (and littoral, too: beaches feature regularly in his films). After that, there is an abrupt transition: we go straight into 'Autumn' as Isabelle enters an anonymous luxury hotel for her first trick. The lack of any explanation is one of many challenges thrown down by this deceptively simple film, which goes much further beneath the surface of its character than did either *Swimming Pool* or *Dans la maison*, while pretending all along to be doing no more than coolly observe. Vacth, a natural screen actress, is a big part of this.

Nick Roddick: How did you find your lead actress?

François Ozon: I met a lot of young girls of that age and I gave them the interrogation scene with the police-woman to read. Many of them were very good, but I had the feeling of watching a TV drama. Then Marine arrived and something magical happened: she was there and she was somewhere else. Just watching her, you had the feeling of something happening inside. For a director, it's very precious when you meet an



LIP GLOSS
Model turned actress Marine Vacth in *Jeune & jolie*, above, directed by François Ozon, below





actress like that. You don't need dialogue because her face is very expressive, very mysterious. I had the same feeling when I met Charlotte Rampling for the first time.

NR: You start the film from the point of view of Isabelle's younger brother, Victor, watching through binoculars as she takes off her bikini top.

FO: I decided to shoot this girl like a mystery. I wanted to begin with the point of view of the young brother, and after to lose it because, when she has sex for the first time with the German boy, she decides to stop sharing things with her brother. She knows a new life is beginning for her, so it was important to change the point of view, to have a different way of looking at her.

NR: When we get into 'Autumn', she's already a prostitute. Weren't you interested in how that happened?

FO: It's not a general film about prostitution. But it's very easy to find sex today, with the internet and all the social media: with two clicks you can have it all. That's the big change. Isabelle is not connected to her emotions. It's the story of someone who's not

able to connect feelings, emotion, love and sex.

NR: And money?

FO: It was important from the start to bring up the problem of money. It would be easy to say, 'I'm doing this because I need the money'. That happens very often. It was more interesting to have a girl who comes from a bourgeois family and doesn't need money. It's something else. And this young girl knows exactly the price of things. Maybe that's the thing with this generation: an obsession with money, with value. We are in a financial world: you can see that very clearly with young people.

NR: Do young girls from wealthy French families often go into prostitution?

FO: I saw lots of policemen who specialise in young people who become prostitutes. They told me that it happens quite often in a rich family that young girls do that. And the shrink who is in the film is a real shrink who specialises in teenagers. He was very helpful. The scene when she says, "I want to pay" with the money she's earned from sex: that's the real reaction of



the shrink – he said, “It’s your money. I think it’s a good idea.”

NR: If it’s not about prostitution, what is it about?

FO: The idea was to give a different vision of adolescence from what we see so often in French cinema. It’s very idealised; there is a lot of nostalgia about it. I have no nostalgia about my young years. For me, they were a difficult period. I had a lot of struggles in my body and my family.

NR: The relationship with the older man, Georges, seems to be a defining one for Isabelle. Is it about sex or money?

FO: Of course she wants to be paid. That’s important for her. But there is something else: there is a kind of tenderness. So it can be helpful for her. Is it a problem to have sex with someone older than you? I have no problem with that. It’s a fantasy for many women – maybe not just women. If it’s your choice, there’s no humiliation. Sometimes it’s good to be the object of desire of someone else. Why not? It’s a game. Sex is between two people, and sometimes it’s not you who has the power. It’s good not to be in control. You should try it! You can’t control everything.

NR: Were the sex scenes difficult to do?

FO: They were quite easy. I explained to Marine what I wanted to show, what I didn’t want to show, what was important for me. And I tried to convince her it was important for the film. The fact that she was a model was very helpful, because she is very free with her body. And she has a beautiful body, so it’s not a problem. With some other actresses, sometimes it’s more difficult because the body is, er, not so perfect!

NR: Why did you include the discussion of the Rimbaud poem ‘Roman’ (‘Romance’), which begins ‘On n’est pas sérieux quand on a dix-sept ans’?

FO: I love this poem. We learned it at school and I thought it could be interesting to ask the young people of this generation how they see this poem, so the scene was like a documentary. It wasn’t written. But actually it’s quite funny. The title of the poem is ‘We’re not serious when we are 17’. But Isabelle is very serious; she does things very properly.

NR: So those are actual students, using their own words? They’re incredibly articulate.

FO: Yes, they’re very clever! The idea was to place the story in a very intellectual bourgeois family. The Lycée Henri-IV is in the Fifth Arrondissement, it’s very chic,

full of clever students who know many, many things. I went to the Lycée Henri-IV! But, you know, I had another influence: the film *La boum*, which was a big hit in France. That takes place in the Lycée Henri-IV, too. So *Jeune & jolie* is my version of *La boum*!

NR: Speaking of influences, some critics have drawn parallels with Buñuel’s *Belle de jour*.

FO: I didn’t have Buñuel in mind. Of course I watched the film again, and I realised it is really about fantasy: it’s a game. I wanted something more real. The film I had in mind when I was writing *Jeune & jolie* was a movie I saw when I was a teenager: *A nos amours* by Maurice Pialat, starring Sandrine Bonnaire. For me, it’s a beautiful portrait of a teenager – one of the most beautiful films about adolescence. But, of course, when you do something about prostitution, you have to make a connection with *Belle de jour*. Actually, for the end of the film, I had two choices: Charlotte Rampling or Catherine Deneuve. With Catherine Deneuve it would have been too obvious!

NR: You also connect with another French cultural icon: Françoise Hardy.

FO: I really like Françoise Hardy. Her songs for the French have a sadness, but they’re very girly at the same time. I liked the contrast, because there is the cliché of the young and beautiful adolescent and, at the same time, the songs are very melancholy. They were perfect for the film.

NR: At the end of the film Isabelle seems to have found a boyfriend her own age with whom she enjoys having sex. Then she dumps him. Why?

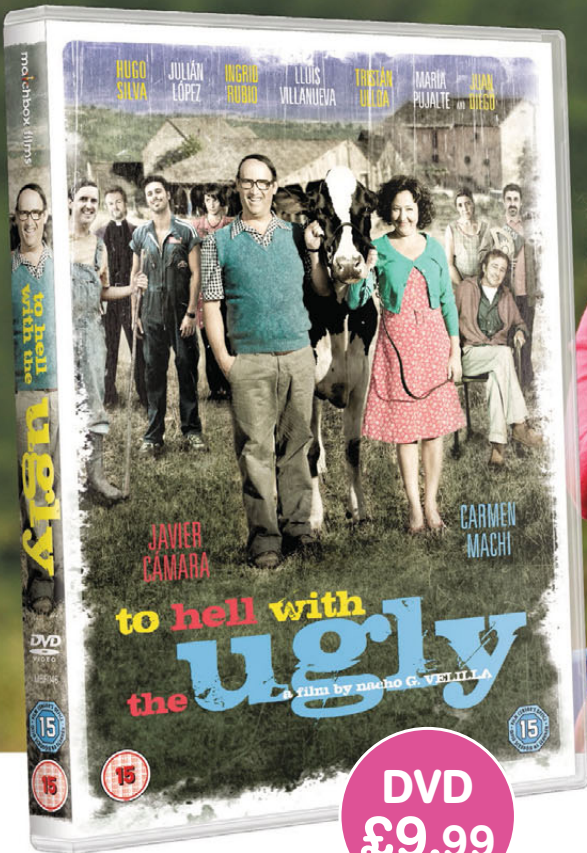
FO: She wants more. She wants something else. This boy is charming; he’s tender, sweet, but she’s looking for something stronger. Why not? Actually, in the script, the end was a little bit different. The end was on the beach: they come back for the summer again and the whole family is there. She is still with the young boy but there is a lot of melancholy in her eyes. We shot all the summer scenes first, and so I shot that last scene of the film on the second day. But Marine changed so much during the shoot that it was impossible to edit those scenes together. She’s so mature at the end after the scene with Charlotte Rampling; for me she becomes a woman, she becomes an adult. So that was the real end of the film.

i *Jeune & jolie* is released on 29 November and is reviewed on page 66

I didn’t have Buñuel in mind... But, of course, when you do something about prostitution, you have to make a connection with ‘Belle de jour’

LIP SERVICE
Schoolgirl Isabelle (Vacht with mother Géraldine Pailhas, left) turns into freelance call-girl Léa





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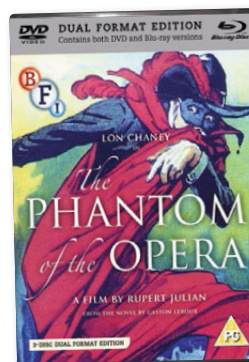
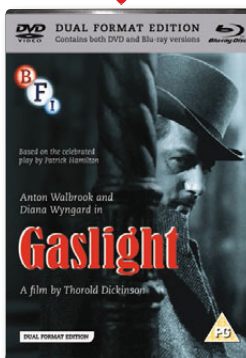
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PROFILE

MYSTERIES OF LISBON

The freakish imagery, local concerns and everyday, universal emotion of the Portuguese director João Pedro Rodrigues

By Ben Walters

A teenage trash collector in a gimp suit stalking across landfill like a slick black insect; a middle-aged trans cabaret performer squeezing discharge from an infected nipple; the shade of Jane Russell as a mermaid frolicking deep in a tank in a Macao market as headless fish flop nearby. There's more to the cinema of João Pedro Rodrigues than the visceral and grotesque – much more – but those are the kinds of image that stick in the head. Perhaps it's because they touch on so many key concerns: the body as both vehicle of expression and source of confusion and trauma; the importance of distinctive locales rendered with cinematic sympathy; and perhaps most fundamentally, the basic human challenge of meaningful connection.

"My films talk a lot about loneliness and lonely people, people who have a problem dealing with others," Rodrigues told me in September at the Queer Lisboa film festival in his home town. "But I think it's also their choice to be alone. It's easier, if you have to be alive, sometimes not to relate to other people but to build up your own world and your own obsessions."

That's the tension underlying Rodrigues's first three features, *O Fantasma* (*The Phantom*, 2000), *Two Drifters* (*Odete*, 2005) and *To Die Like a Man* (*Morrer Como Um Homem*, 2009). In the first, trash collector Sergio (Ricardo Meneses) exploits the opportunities of his nocturnal work to explore a compulsive carnality that borders on the feral; he speaks very little but you can practically scent his musk. One of the lead characters of *Two Drifters*, *Odete* (Ana Cristina de Oliveira), is comparably single-minded in her fixation on marking the memory of a deceased young man as her own emotional territory, despite the raw grief of his surviving boyfriend. *To Die like a Man*, meanwhile, centres around the way ageing, perhaps dying performer Tonia (Fernando Santos) has

constructed her identity through and despite her body; travelling with her boyfriend, she explores other ways of being, and returns to square one.

The films are not, Rodrigues keenly points out, a trilogy, but they share a set of concerns and expressive turns, ambivalently exploring compulsion, desire and companionship through unblinking observation and eloquent compositions punctuated by glamorous or surreal flourishes: a musical number here, a quotidian apparition there. It adds up to a distinctively personal sensibility.

"Most of the films talk about myself even if they're not autobiographical," Rodrigues says. "I can see myself as Sergio, as *Odete*, as Tonia and many other characters. I think it's impossible to make films without talking

'It's easier, if you have to be alive, sometimes not to relate to other people but to build up your own world and your own obsessions'



Freaky deaky: one of the Jane Russell mermaids in *Alvorada Vermelha* (2011)

about yourself, especially nowadays. Under the studio system it wasn't so evident but making films independently, it's me who decides the form, the structure, the editing, everything – though I don't want to be self-centred. I'm not doing films for myself. I want other people to see them and enjoy them."

This partly shows through in a playful engagement with Hollywood history – the Jane Russell mermaids in the short film *Alvorada Vermelha* (*Red Dawn*, 2011, co-directed with João Rui Guerra da Mata), for instance, or the soft spot that Odete's rival in mourning has for *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Rodrigues also has an admiration for John Ford. "I feel I learned a lot from those films," he says of classical Hollywood. "They're like a matrix. There are these film genres that were codified and I'm very interested in playing with these codes. It's like when you write – you can play with words or be graphic or whatever but language and writing are codified and you write like that. I think it's more or less the same [with cinema]."

Rodrigues's stories, then, combine a formal debt to genre conventions with a vertiginous sense of jeopardy in their protagonists' sense of self – a combination that might risk floating free of reality if they weren't so rooted in the real. *O Fantasma*, for instance, grew out of an initially idle fascination. "I became obsessed with garbage collectors. Whenever I heard the garbage truck, I would look out of the window and think, 'Who are these guys?' I got in touch with my local depot and got permission to follow them for about five months, twice a week. I didn't talk much. It wasn't about getting to know them individually. It was to look at their gestures, their routines. I started to think of them as phantoms of the city. If they cared, they could find out who lives where, what their routine is. They're everywhere but they don't really speak. I wanted to portray this invisibility through an almost extreme physicality."

A similar reality effect comes from his use of locations. "The films are almost a documentary portrait of the Lisbon I know," he says. "For me, the stories are very much concerned with a personal geography. They're mostly set in the city where I have always lived." Many dramatic scenes were inspired by knowledge of specific urban topography. "Particularly in the north of the city, where I've always lived, there are still these places like a border between the countryside and the city, small farms, small roads, empty ruins, a frontier between one world and another world. I think my characters are very much between worlds so there's a drama in the places themselves." He mentions the scene in *O Fantasma* in which Sergio finds a policeman tied up in a car and jerks him off. "It's a small country road with a torn-down wall. There was a freeway built that cut it off but my father drove through there to take me to school. These places are in my memory as far back as I can remember and I find ways of shooting them. But I've also always wanted to get out of this place."

This desire to escape showed itself in some of Rodrigues's short work, much of which has been co-directed with João Rui Guerra da Mata, a consistent collaborator – first as actor in Rodrigues's film-school graduation short, latterly



Road dogs: *The Last Time I Saw Macao* (2012)

as art director on his features – with whom Rodrigues has also been in a relationship for more than 20 years. Guerra da Mata grew up in Macao and this liminal island, both Chinese and Portuguese, intrigued Rodrigues. "I had finished *To Die like a Man* and didn't know what I would make next," he says. "[Tonia] was a character who ran away from the city and I wanted to run away too. I always wanted to live abroad. João Rui had always told me stories about Macao, so I thought 'Why not go to Macao?' Not just to visit but to do a film there – and do it together."

The result, the 2012 feature *The Last Time I Saw Macao* (*A Última Vez Que Vi Macau*), directed by both Rodrigues and Guerra da Mata, was closer to their collaborative shorts than Rodrigues's earlier features, a kind of essay-travelogue-mystery playing with autobiography, memory, fantasy and genre (especially *noir* and thrillers), borders between story and life, past and present east and west, intoxicatingly blurred.

A couple more shorts have followed, one collaborative, another – *The King's Body* (*O Corpo de Afonso*) – directed by Rodrigues alone. "I was tired of having to wait for so long between [feature] films," the director says. "Also, shorts let me experiment more. They're quite different from each other." *The King's Body*, which was screening at Queer Lisboa, features interviews with men from Galicia, the Spanish province to the north of Portugal, talking about their lives and bodies within a framing context referring to Dom Afonso Henriques, Portugal's first king. The result



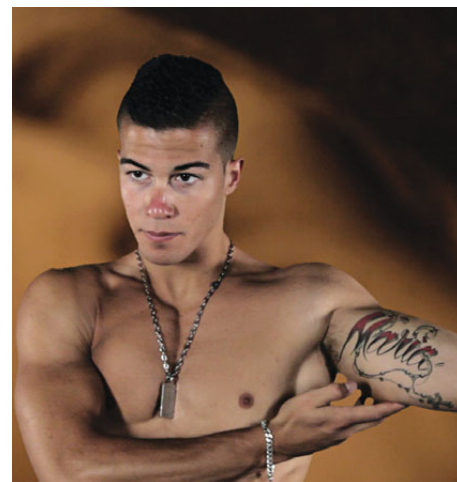
Glitz: *To Die like a Man* (2009)

touches on nationalism, language, masculinity and contemporary concerns, not least economic turmoil. "I organised it as a casting," Rodrigues says of the production. "I didn't know what they were going to tell me or that it would take on this political angle. But most of them told me they were unemployed. And that's what's happening with a lot of people in Spain and Portugal."

Nor is the film industry immune to such pressures; Portuguese production more or less shut down as the government demoted the ministry of culture to an office within another department. "Things are very difficult," Rodrigues says. "Film here is funded mainly by the state but mostly we've had no money for the past two years. A new law was passed for television and telecommunications operators to give a percentage of their profits to fund cinema but they don't want to pay and so far they aren't being punished. I hope it will change."

Lisbon itself has a relatively progressive policy and Rodrigues is currently working on a new feature, *The Ornithologist*, which builds on some of the ideas about nature and identity explored in *To Die like a Man*. "It's a film that goes back to my childhood," he says. "I wanted to be an ornithologist and it's about an ornithologist. But it's also a biopic of St Anthony. I'm not religious myself but there's a kind of physicality in nature [that touches on] the supernatural or the sacred – something like you see in Pasolini, it's very physical but it's very sacred, kind of sublime. So this film is very physical – it will be shot entirely in exteriors in very wild parts of north Portugal that are still very unpolluted and 'unhumanised'. But at the same time it's talking about a transformation that a character can follow, a kind of beatification – you yourself in confrontation with the unknown can become someone else."

This production, all on location outside Lisbon, only shooting exteriors, is a big break for a filmmaker defined in some ways by his city. Yet as a child, he says, "I always hated the city. My father comes from the north and every weekend we went there. I tried to identify every bird that lived there in each season, when they arrived, when they left, where they made their nests – very scientific in a juvenile way. I had this idea of being alone in nature and in a way it's going back to that." ☺



Hombre: *The King's Body* (2012)

THE NATURE OF DEATH

How Southern gothic with a French accent became an American TV classic: you are entering *The Twilight Zone*

By Frances Morgan

"You unlock this door with the key of imagination," intones *The Twilight Zone*'s Rod Serling in the familiar opening credits of the original TV series, screened between 1959 and 1964. "Beyond it is another dimension. A dimension of sound" – a distorted crunch of breaking glass – "A dimension of sight. A dimension of mind."

It's striking that hearing is the first sense to be affected by the uncanny, that sound is the first intimation that we're somewhere new. As if to drive the point home, it is even signalled by a noise that instantly calls to mind shock, rupture and things broken apart. The device is clunky to modern ears – and was probably just as clunky 50 years ago – but still, it's an enjoyably blunt articulation of ideas about noise as a conduit for fear that have become widespread in film, music and sound studies writing in recent years.

What follows, though, is something far more subtle. This particular episode of *The Twilight Zone* from 1964 hosts French director Robert Enrico's short film *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (*La Rivière du Hibou*, 1961) – one third of a trilogy by the director based on the American Civil War stories of the 19th-century writer Ambrose Bierce. Its evocation of the uncanny through sound is, despite the strictures of its period and form, prescient, transporting and deeply strange. The film is being shown this month as part of 'The Nightmare Space', a programme of short films in BFI's current Gothic season. Yet you won't hear any tritones, jagged strings, demonic voices or any of the other tropes often associated with horror and the cinematic gothic here. *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* takes place in bright daylight rather than the witching hour, and it buzzes with hyperreal sounds from the natural world.

An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge tells the story of the death of a Southern plantation owner caught sabotaging the bridge of the title, which crosses a wide river that Bierce places in Alabama. As the film starts, the Union soldiers who have captured him are preparing a noose in order to hang him from the bridge. But none of this is seen for a good few minutes. Instead, Enrico introduces what will turn out to be the film's leading character: the natural environment of this imagined American South, played here, for an extra surreal touch, by a location in rural France. An owl's last call gives way to a slow crescendo of dawn chorus as soldiers are glimpsed at a distance, through the trees, before we close in on the bridge itself and the man, played by Robert Jacquet. Almost no dialogue disturbs this wild soundscape, only the highly amplified and ominous sounds of rope and wood as a makeshift scaffold is prepared.

The lack of speech in this and Enrico's other Bierce films – *The Mockingbird* and *Chickamauga* – may well have been pragmatic: at one point in *The Mockingbird* the main character, a Confederate soldier, speaks in a distractingly



Present at a hanging: above and below, *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* (1961)

strong French accent, and there's no getting around the awkwardness of a voiceover that briefly explains his inner thoughts. The soldier is a quiet man who, at the start of the film, is taking the night watch, silent and hyper-alert – as is the viewer – to the cries of night birds and the sound of human interlopers. In *Chickamauga* the protagonist is, conveniently, a boy who can neither hear nor speak, and can thus wander through the aftermath of a gruesome battle without any verbal reaction to it. Jacquet, in *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, after appearing to escape from his punishment, spends most of the film swimming downriver, gasping for air, and running through woods in attempt to reach his home. But this allows Enrico to choreograph the sound of his films in a way that overrides language, approaching the musical or balletic in pace and precision. When programmatic music appears, it's a bit of a disappointment – an ersatz spiritual that spells out the film's preoccupation

Enrico choreographs the sound in a way that overrides language, approaching the musical or balletic

with life, death and nature in a way that Enrico's direction more than handles on its own (it's notable that before this trilogy he was best known for an award-winning documentary about a species of moth). But this, when combined with bursts of frantic jazz drumming that chop in and out of the soundtrack in a deliberate echo of the ricocheting gunshots fired by the soldiers at their quarry, eventually contributes to the playful, fantastical feel of *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge*, which is confirmed by its conclusion: that the prisoner's 'escape' is nothing but a kind of dream sequence, a vivid flash-forward fantasy that somehow takes place in the few seconds before



death. It is not only the remote setting and the lonesome owl hoots that suggest David Lynch might have thought of this film while making *Twin Peaks*—there's something in the knowing sentimentality of the song 'Livin' Man', coupled with the alien aspect of nature and the stark, ever-present reminders of death, that brings to mind the later series' psychological twists and turns. That the 1961 film became a hit on mainstream US television was perhaps an early indication that the medium could take more visual and sonic experimentation than one might expect.

Enrico's three Bierce adaptations were intended to be viewed as one film in three parts, and were released like that on DVD earlier this year. *Chickamauga* and *The Mockingbird* never made it to *The Twilight Zone* or *Alfred Hitchcock Presents...*, and so are less well-known; both share a mannered feel with their companion, and a not entirely unwelcome foreignness. In all three, sound is not only deftly designed and recorded, but also a driver of narrative. It is an unexpected sound that sets in motion *The Mockingbird*—the sentry kills an unseen intruder who turns out to be his twin (or even himself); while the hearing impairment of the boy in *Chickamauga* seems to be a metaphor for the horror and dissociation caused by war. In both, the landscape rustles with life that can be heard amid and above the sound of guns and cannons. *The Mockingbird*, in particular, focuses on the minutiae of its setting, with a dream or memory sequence that shows the soldier and his brother as children, teaching a mockingbird to sing, feeding it frogs and, in a sequence clearly indebted to *The Night of the Hunter* (1955), taking it in its cage on a boat down a swampy river as a storm builds. There are inevitably echoes of Charles Laughton's film in Enrico's European oddities—the most effective are the ones in which we see and hear the uncanny presence of non-human life, amplified to highlight the other twilight—or dawn—worlds that exist alongside this one; the "hard world for little things" that Lillian Gish speaks of as she watches an owl dispatch a rabbit in Laughton's definitive Southern gothic. As Bierce writes of his protagonist's heightened perceptions as he hovers between life and death: "The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon flies' wings, the strokes of the water spiders' legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music." ☞

i **An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge** is showing as part of 'The Nightmare Space' at BFI Southbank, 21 November.



PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA

Ukrainian lyricism and satire and Wellesian beginnings at Pordenone's Giornate del Cinema Muto



By Geoff Brown

There was cruel irony in the selection of the Georgian propaganda film *Ten Minutes in the Morning* for the opening session of the 2013 Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone. A finger kept pointing at the audience, insisting on the necessity of 10 minutes' daily physical exercise to keep body and nation together. And there we were, embarking on a week of sitting motionless in the dark watching silent films.

An exercise regime would have been useful to limber up for this year's challenging programme. Billed as a "festival of discovery", it was crammed to the witching hour with an unusually high ratio of continental rarities and obscurities, often from directors whose names seemed as difficult to spell as pronounce. Mykola Shpykovskiy was a particular handful at first, but we soon got into the swing of it, driven by the expressive force of his two surviving features, *Khlib* (*Bread*) and *Shkurnyk* (*The Self-Seeker*)—star exhibits in a strand devoted to reclaiming Ukraine's silent cinema from the Soviet Union's former choking embrace.

Khlib (1930), a drama about collective farming, demonstrated the special Ukrainian gift for creating piercingly lyrical cinema from the life, actions and thoughts of ordinary people. Dovzhenko exploited this to monumental symbolic effect in *Earth* (*Zemlya*, 1930) and *Arsenal* (1929), but Shpykovskiy's images stayed simple and humane; the father-and-son conflict and visual acuity of *Khlib* was striking enough. *Shkurnyk* (1929) added another gift: satirical comedy, delivered here with a light flourish that brought to mind the achievements of the 1960s Czech new wave.

Part picaresque war movie, part road movie and flight into the absurd, *Shkurnyk* was consistently warmed by its appealing hero, a bourgeois opportunist in Russia's civil war constantly hopping between Red and White camps. Blessed with a sunshine grin, Ivan Sadovskiy bubbled over with charisma in the role. Initially banned, then forgotten, *Shkurnyk* was rediscovered by film historians in the 1990s; now it needs to travel the world with other previously mislaid Ukrainian treasures, though preferably not via the generally fuzzy DCP files sent to Pordenone.

No one found any problem spelling Orson Welles, a name on everyone's lips long before Pordenone's world premiere of largely unedited footage from *Too Much Johnson*, a youthful experiment in silent cinema, shot in 1938 and meant to be slotted into a Mercury Theatre stage production of William Gillette's fast-talking American farce. The material's rediscovery doesn't rewrite film history, and the footage needed propping up on the night

An exercise regime would have been useful to limber up for this year's challenging programme



Swede moments: *Flickan i Frack* (*The Girl in Tails*)

by Philip C. Carli's propulsive piano and Paolo Cherchi Usai's skilful spoken commentary, which guided us helpfully through the elaborate plot and the film's other peculiarities as Mercury actors gesticulated and chased each other silly.

The roundelay of alternate takes took its toll. It was fascinating, even exciting, to watch Welles's eloquent exploitation of architectural space and Joseph Cotten's extraordinary energy and fearlessness, teetering over the Manhattan skyline as Gillette's trickster hero, but the diamond-sharp control and brilliance of *Citizen Kane*, made just two years later, did seem a world away.

More discoveries lay ahead in the groundbreaking survey of Soviet silent animation (full of sweet surprises, especially 1929's *Pochta*). In the strand entitled 'Sealed Lips: Sweden's Forgotten Years, 1925-1929', the prints looked too soft and most films lasted far too long for the trivial stories being told. But it only needed a graceful camera movement, a directorial subtlety or some radiant acting for irritations to fade. Four were directed by Gustaf Molander, chiefly essays in the period's international style, though the most interesting film from several angles was the 1926 comedy *Flickan i Frack* (*The Girl in Tails*)—slow-moving, delightful, strewn with affecting vignettes, directed by the actress Karin Swanström, one of Sweden's few female directors of the time.

Anny Ondra, a European film star of Czech origin, failed to charm in her own strand: her best Czech films do not appear to have survived. But interest remained steady in Germany's offering: four films by Gerhard Lamprecht, future director of *Emil and the Detectives* (1931). Most of the Ukrainian musical accompaniments, plastered on top of the films, had been off-putting; not so the atmospheric performances by Donald Sosin and friends for *Unter der Laterne* (*Under the Lantern*, 1928) and Lamprecht's other explorations of the lower depths of society—sobering social documents that always veered into artifice at some point but never lost their clarity or heart.

And prize for the week's best intertitle must go to the stirringly childish 1936 Soviet extravaganza *Kosmicheskii Reis* (*Cosmic Voyage*). It read, in English: "You go and collect the atmosphere and I'll go and check on the cat." Such is life in outer space. ☞

THE MIGHTY WALSER

From a story by Robert Walser, a choreographer and a director have made a mesmerising piece of 'perambulatory poetics'

By Sukhdev Sandhu

By Christmas Day 1956, when his frozen body was found by schoolchildren in a field of snow near the asylum where he had resided for more than 20 years, the Swiss writer Robert Walser had been largely forgotten. There had been a time when the failed actor and former butler, born in 1878, was well known among Europe's literary intelligentsia: Robert Musil, Hermann Hesse, Stefan Zweig, Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin all admired his short stories and novels. During the 1920s, though, he was increasingly afflicted by hallucinations. In 1933 he entered a sanatorium, announcing: "I am not here to write, but to be mad."

Since his death Walser has attracted a new and equally ardent following. Susan Sontag, J.M. Coetzee and W.G. Sebald have all been compelled by the vagrant, almost bathetic trajectory of his life, the mysteriously self-erasing qualities of his prose (which, according to Sebald, "has the tendency to dissolve upon reading, so that only a few hours later one can barely remember the ephemeral figures, events and things of which it spoke"), and the mesmerising isolationism his writings project (his 'Microscripts', originally assumed to be written in a secret code and composed on tiny strips of paper, were so small that a whole story could fit on the back of a business card).

Now *The Walk*, a 1917 novella, has become the basis of *All This Can Happen*, a remarkable filmic treatment by Siobhan Davies and David Hinton. Its storyline is simple: a writer decides to go for a walk through a provincial Swiss town one morning and along the way encounters a bookseller who proffers him an acclaimed bestseller that he loathes, a bank official who gives him a large sum of money, a former actress, a giant who forces him to eat a huge lunch that leaves him in pain, and a tailor whom he berates.

Who is this writer? He constantly refers to his modest means and frugal habits, but wears a dandyish yellow suit. By turns, he likens himself to a vagabond or vagrant, but also to a great lord or marquis, while coming across as a pompous Pooter type too. On his walk he displays a notary's or actuary's eye for detail, rendering his prose almost indexical, yet his language can be florid to the point of baroque. The landscapes through which he moves come across as stage sets, memory prompts, launch pads for pontifical disquisitions. The line between past and present, self and others, reality and unreality becomes blurry. At one point he even labels the walk "a fantasy".

All This Can Happen is a particularly bold example of perambulatory poetics that is, in different ways, informed by Rebecca Solnit's study *Wanderlust* (in which she celebrates walking for its ability to unite the heart and the head, emotional and analytical intelligence) and by the writings of Sebald – more than once its haunted



Walk hard: a split-screen scene from *All This Can Happen*




Taking a tumble: still photos of Cheshire Territorials

topographics and dense language recall Grant Gee's 2011 visual essay *Patience* (After Sebald).

It might be expected that Davies, a distinguished choreographer, and Hinton, a Bafta-winning director who has often been drawn to the work of dancers in his films, might be attracted to a fiction in which walking becomes an elaborate and idiosyncratic dance of thoughts and bodily gestures. What's striking is the emphasis they place on stasis, hesitancy, immobility: they incorporate often upsetting medical footage of men – presumably WW1 veterans – trying to stand on their feet, hinting not only at the traumas Walser may have undergone during his own military service, but also at modernism's systematic preoccupation with breakdown and incapacity.

All This Can Happen is equally arresting as an archive film constructed entirely out of late-19th and early-20th-century home movies, natural history footage and the pioneering photography of Etienne-Jules Marey. Streetscapes recall the accelerated poetry of 1920s city symphony films. Shots of office workers' body parts or mechanised labour evoke classic time-motion studies and European art's inter-war obsession with processes of atomisation and psychological fragmentation.

Much of the film's movement is generated by the splitting of screens: a triptych of a man in various stages of washing resembles the slurred paroxysms of a Francis Bacon painting. At times there are 15 images on screen, edited and arranged with a precision both forensic and intimate, all speaking – however tangentially – to each other. It's easy to imagine the work being presented in an art gallery, but Davies and Hinton's conceptual rigour, imaginative reach, to say nothing of the intricacy and subtlety with which they trace resonances between images, makes most art-world split-screen work seem gauche.

All This Can Happen could also function independently as an audio essay. Chu-Li Shewring's sound design creates a molecular illbience whose potency grows and grows. John Heffernan's voiceover is by turns droll, absurd, plaintive, stricken. Davies and Hinton have achieved the near-impossible: a film both harrowing and full of levity, pathological and poignant, microscopic and expansive. They have not so much captured as liberated Walser's unclassifiable genius. 

 ***All This Can Happen* is screening at London's ICA on 19 November and 7 and 8 December**

OUTSIDE IN

As queer cinema starts to converge with the mainstream, the Queer Lisboa festival questions where the boundaries lie

By Ben Walters

In the late 1970s, San Francisco's Frameline began producing festivals of gay-themed Super 8 films. The impetus was part activist, part utilitarian – to provide a platform for work that might not be shown elsewhere and a forum for non-straight filmmakers and audiences to connect with one another. These were arguably the world's first gay film festivals and established the key concerns of such events. In the following decades, the Aids crisis and the campaign to end legal discrimination dominated queer politics and culture. Those issues haven't gone away, but in the EU and the US – the dominant hubs of the LGBT film festival circuit as it burgeoned over those years – they no longer have the quality of existential struggle that fuelled so much art and activism in the 80s and 90s.

This century, with some notable exceptions, LGBT feature filmmaking, like the culture from which it grows, has taken a turn for the conservative-aspirational: meeting cute isn't just for straights any more. Meanwhile, distribution channels have proliferated, from specialist DVD labels to online exhibition platforms. In other words, the reasons for having gay film festivals aren't so clear: LGBT people are less marginalised and more able to create and watch films. This leaves festivals striving to redefine themselves. The BFI's London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival this year invited submissions for a new name. 'Lesbian and Gay', after all, neglects bisexual, trans, intersex or polyamorous people, from whom much interesting recent festival programming has come.

Queer Lisboa, the 17th edition of which ran this year from September 20 to 28, offers some interesting strategies for the future. It is Lisbon's longest-running film festival, and its audience has grown every year. Although the festival's official description bills it as an LGBT event, its contents imply a broader definition of 'queer' than simply non-hetero sexuality, focusing on marginality of many kinds. A mid-sized festival which draws for its programming on the likes of Berlin, Rotterdam and Sundance, it includes competitions for features, documentaries and shorts, and several sidebars. As elsewhere on the circuit, there are numerous dramas about star-cross'd lovers (*Out in the Dark*, *Freefall*) and documentaries about elders of the tribe (Divine, Joan Rivers, Gore Vidal, Bette Bourne). But a strain of oddity stands out. The main prizes went to Georgian director Zaza Rusadze's *Chemi Sabnis Nakesti* (*A Fold in My Blanket*), an off-kilter story rich in ennui and absurdity, and the Mexican documentary *Disrupted* (*Quebranto*), by Roberto Fiesco, about a trans performer (and former child actor) and her actor mother. Shades of *Grey Gardens*...

Perhaps the most representative strand in this respect was Queer Focus. For this collection of five features, programmed by Pedro Marum and Ricke Merighi, sexuality was a secondary



Off kilter: *Chemi Sabnis Nakesti* (*A Fold in My Blanket*)

'Queer doesn't have to have a gay, lesbian or trans narrative. It's about exclusion, how identity can be erased'

consideration at best; their queerness was rooted in the economics, topography and social flux of urban spaces on the brink. In *Wildness*, young trans performer Wu Tsang picks up a camera on behalf of a building: the Silver Platter, a Los Angeles bar that was an oasis for immigrant trans women before Tsang's cohort moved in with their alt-queer performance party, Wildness. Tracing the ensuing strain on various relationships, the film is alert to all sides of the story and to Tsang's own failings. *Gut Renovation* is a thriller take on gentrification: artist Su Friedrich uses her video camera to record the rapacious redevelopment of the Williamsburg, Brooklyn, neighbourhood where she and her girlfriend lived for 20 years. There's less sensitivity or self-awareness here, just a shedload of righteous indignation and valuable documentation of the dirty details of market forces at ground-level.

All the Queer Focus titles showed an eye for the small details that tell the big story. The Austrian immigration service comes in for

scrutiny in Anja Salomonowitz's documentary *The 727 Days Without Karamo*, especially the financial and cultural requirements it imposes on married partners of Austrian nationals. Only one or two of the dozens of couples interviewed were LGBT but all had been 'queered' by the state's stringent demands. And people were queer in the broadest sense in Khavn De La Cruz's delirious *Mondomanila*, a kind of extra-exuberant, ultra-grotesque tween *Trainspotting* shot in the Filipino capital's favelas: only one kid was evidently not straight, while others were physically disabled and all were disenfranchised.

They at least knew what they were dealing with. Ektoros Lygizos's *Boy Eating the Bird's Food* (*To agori troi to fagito tou pouliou*) follows a straight 22-year-old Athenian, one of the city's new class of outwardly normal people who struggle to fill their bellies. The homoeroticism of an explicit masturbation scene yields to horrified pity as we realise our subject is so hungry he has to eat his own semen.

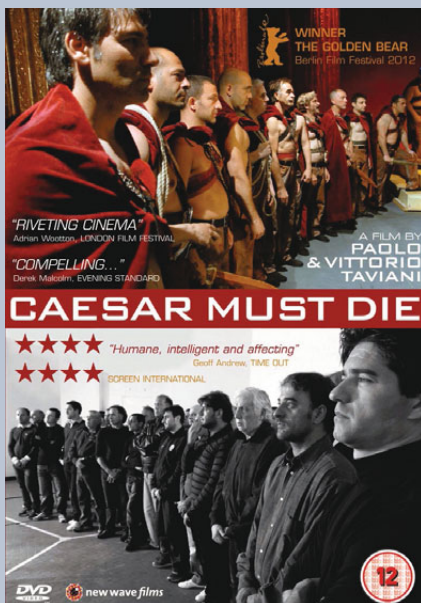
Portugal's economic situation is not as bad as Greece's but it's not good. "For me it was almost scary watching that film," says João Ferreira, Queer Lisboa's artistic director. "We fear something like this could happen to Portugal." Funded by Lisbon's City Hall and Cinema Institute, the festival is secure at least through its 2014 edition, which will be Ferreira's tenth as artistic director. He has taken a catholic approach to programming queerness since he started. "Queer doesn't have to have a gay, lesbian or trans narrative. It's about exclusion, how identity can be erased; also aesthetically, there's a queer way of looking at things. It's more interesting to show an LGBT audience they can be reflected in realities that aren't necessarily a mirror of their own, and also to attract a general audience to these issues by showing films that have a broad appeal."

Cultural events exploring experiences of powerlessness and alienation are likely to be a growth area in the coming years – whatever the sexuality of their subjects. ☺



Shades of *Grey Gardens*: *Quebranto* (*Disrupted*)

new wave films on DVD



Caesar Must Die

Paolo and Vittorio Taviani

Winner of the 2012 Golden Bear in Berlin, and marking a triumphant come-back for the Taviani brothers, this shows the creation of a performance of Julius Caesar by the inmates of Rome's high security Rebibbia prison. The political infighting of the play as interpreted by these tough men of honour becomes both many-layered and moving.

★★★★★

"The Tavianis explore the complex relationship between life and art... humane, intelligent and affecting"
Geoff Andrew
Time Out

★★★★★

"The Tavianis show with this remarkable, fresh and moving drama-documentary they have lost none of that mix of rigour and sympathy for the underdog that marked *Padre Padrone*"
Lee Marshall
Screen International

Available on DVD and download 25 November

● Also includes interviews with the actors, directors and behind the scenes documentary.



The Wall

Julian Roman Pölsler

An adaptation of the best-selling novel by the Austrian author Marlen Haushofer, the film stars Martina Gedeck who gives a solo performance of enormous strength, both mental and physical. A woman is cut off in the Alps alone but for a dog, a cow, a cat and her determination to survive, even when the rest of the world has possibly perished.

★★★★★

"This mesmerising, austere and contemplative film provides a rarified yet utterly immersive viewing experience"
Trevor Johnston
Time Out

★★★★★

"Manages to be at once a creepy sci-fi parable, a feminist Robinson Crusoe and a clear-eyed ode to the wonders of nature experienced in solitude"
Xan Brooks, The Guardian

"Riveting and emotionally involving from start to finish"
Jonathan Romney
Screen International

Available on DVD and download 25 November

● Available in both the original German and a specially recorded English voice-over by Martina Gedeck

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★★★★★
THE TIMES

★★★★★
THE INDEPENDENT

★★★★★
RTE

★★★★★
THE GUARDIAN

★★★★★
THE INDEPENDENT

★★★★★
TIME OUT

Umut Dağ's mature feature debut, which officially opened the Panorama section at 62nd Berlinale Film Festival is a rich tapestry of swirling emotions, suppressed desires, unspoken words and uncomfortable yet pressing social and political questions.

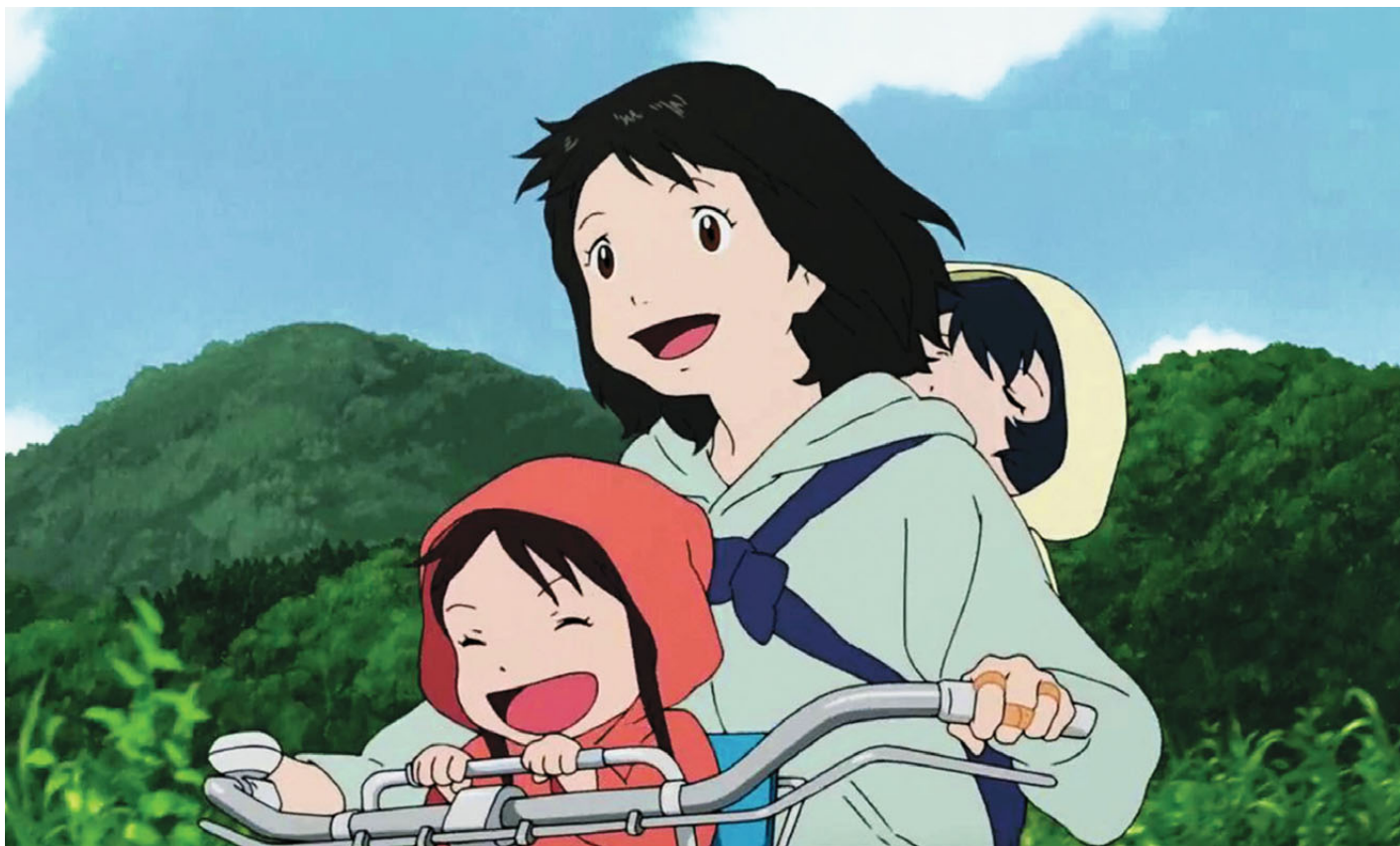
Based on true events, celebrated director Joachim Lafosse's intense, multi-layered dissection of an unorthodox family unit created an unprecedented buzz at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, and won Emilie Dequenne the prestigious *Un Certain Regard* ~ Best Actress Award.

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Reviews



95 **Wolf Children**

'Wolf Children' comes to Britain weeks after Miyazaki Hayao ('Spirited Away') announced his retirement from filmmaking. on the evidence of this thoroughly delightful film, director Hosoda Mamoru has the best claim to be Miyazaki's creative successor.



80 Films of the month



88 Films



112 Home Cinema



122 Books

Blue Is the Warmest Colour

France/Belgium/Spain 2013

Director: Abdellatif Kechiche

Certificate 18 179m 35s

See Feature
on page 38

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

Abdellatif Kechiche's *La Vie d'Adèle, chapitres 1 & 2* has been retitled *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* for its international release. The original French

title is the more accurate: this is a film of two halves. Referring to the 'before' and 'after' of a lesbian relationship in the life of protagonist Adèle, the title could also refer to the two films that have been awkwardly intertwined. The first is a *Bildungsroman* about a young working-class woman exploring her appetites and identity, carried by a central performance of astounding stamina and honesty by Adèle Exarchopoulos, as Adèle, who is on screen almost constantly, often centrally framed in tight close-ups. Secondly (although it has received the most attention), this is also a loose adaptation of Julie Maroh's graphic novel *Le bleu est une couleur chaude*, recounting the relationship, from love at first sight to stormy break-up via uninhibited sex, between straight-identified lycée student Adèle and out, blue-haired artist Emma.

While borrowing the source text's lesbian relationship, the film strips out both the narrative structure – in which Emma reads her ex-girlfriend's diary after her death, coming to understand and confront the painful effect of the latter's parents' homophobia – and the attendant political implications of Maroh's depiction of a profound connection between lovers across age, class and sexual identity. For most viewers, the original graphic novel – yet to be translated into English – will be little more than a titular presence, so the freedom of Kechiche's adaptation rightly won't concern them. Yet tonal, narrative and even visual divergences from the source text offer a critical and telling basis for understanding the film's central problem.

To take one example, a damning playground attack in Maroh's novel, which makes pivotal the traumatic force of state- and church-licensed homophobia, loses its narrative and dramatic coherence in the film when Adèle's attacker backs off, conceding that she doesn't care whether Adèle is gay. The film's representation of female characters at ease with their desire across sexual identities – Pride is one big party here, awash with rainbow flags and hip-shimmying – could be seen as liberating and celebratory, especially given the trope of the tragic lesbian in cinema. Premiered at Cannes close to the signing of the same-sex marriage bill in France, the film appears to confirm a post-homophobic culture; in the ten years since the events of Maroh's novel, it suggests, France has moved on to casual acceptance, an assertion disproved by the violent protests against the bill.

Like homophobia, the lesbian here melts away. As with many male fantasies of lesbianism, the film centres on the erotic success and affective failures of relations between women – what could be called the impossibility of a lesbian relationship – compounded when Emma admits to Adèle, after their break-up, that her relationship with new partner Lise is emotionally sound but sexless, in contrast to the appetitive yet unstable



Blue crush: Adèle Exarchopoulos as Adèle, left, and Léa Seydoux as Emma

relationship she had with Adèle, which provides the centrepiece sex scenes. Kechiche has said both that he drew on classical art as an inspiration for framing and showed the performers lesbian porn: a telling pairing, which asserts the pervasiveness of the male gaze. Kechiche even has a male gallerist tell Emma that depictions of women in art are always depictions of male pleasure: Emma challenges him, but he becomes her representative at the end of the film, and his statement seems similarly representative.

There's absolutely no consciousness here of the rich body of work exploring a lesbian erotic aesthetic, ranging in cinema from Chantal Akerman's *Je tu il elle* (1976) to Campbell X's *Stud Life* (2012); instead, every verbal and visual reference is to the work of male artists. From the opening, with a follow-cam trained on Adèle from behind (an often repeated shot), the film asserts its conventional male gaze. It's presented troublingly under the cover of a female point of view, despite Adèle being granted relatively few POV shots apart from her initial sight of Emma. Exarchopoulos expresses herself through a rhythmic connection between her movements and her verbal delivery, but her body is subject to a constant disassemblage by framing and editing, reducing it to parts for consumption.

In class, Adèle and her fellow students discuss

Pierre de Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, whose male inscription of a female first-person point of view appears to license Kechiche's own. Kechiche also cited Marivaux in 2003's *Games of Love and Chance*, and both films aim for the bantering philosophical speculation about desire that's known in France as *marivaudage*. The clunky dialogue can't sustain this; suggestive food metaphors – the appetitive Adèle likes the fat on ham, and learns to eat oysters via Emma – are eye-rolling. Adèle's love of dance expresses her character more creatively, as well as allowing



Point break-up: Jérémie Laheurte, Exarchopoulos



Emma's character is a familiar type from French cinema: the artist from the haute bourgeoisie who conquers women and discards them

with a puckish humanity, her mobile face and expressive hands fully inhabiting the role of the artist, but – compared to the grief-stricken, politically conscious Emma who provides the frame narrative for Maroh's novel – she is a thin character, saved by performance.

In a similar alteration, which erases the story's specificity and indeed its lesbian erotic, the colour blue migrates from Emma's hair to appear wherever Adèle casts her desiring gaze. Maroh uses it rigorously to highlight the presence of the beloved in the black-and-white sections that represent diary entries, but in the film blue is pervasive, to the point of diluting its meaning, its jolt of desiring energy. Denim schoolbags, blue nail varnish, blue café walls, blue water: Kechiche depicts a post-sexuality society in which Adèle's bisexual polyamory, her love of all things blue, is a sign of her sensual freedom. An overdetermined rack focus from Louise Brooks to Adèle, when *Pandora's Box* is screened at a party, pairs the protagonist with Lulu, and offers a post-feminist celebration of female desire (exhibited for the male gaze) without its previously femicidal consequences.

Adèle is thus anointed by Kechiche as a new Marianne, both Marivaux's and the Republic's. Yet Kechiche, like Marivaux, licenses his own desires by embodying them in a female narrator who is also a commonplace feminine symbol for a liberty that offers little actual freedom for women. His familiar masculine idealisation of appetitive femininity replaces a new lesbian voice, Maroh's, with the same old male gaze, in which libertinage is confused with liberation. ☹

for plentiful hip-level shots, yet the narrow framing and lack of connection to the central relationship risk presenting her as no more than an all-eating, all-dancing, all-fucking body.

Where the metaphor of appetite works is not in Adèle's relationship with Emma, but with her parents and her working-class background. Cooking her father's bolognese as the *pièce de résistance* for Emma's graduation party offers a neat class observation; inevitably, however, the dripping spaghetti becomes the pivot for a flirtation with Emma's friend Samir, positioned as a potential future partner by the film's end. The party, a study in awkwardness, is infinitely more informative and deeply felt than the sex scenes that precede it – Kechiche has a gift for social comedy, as does Exarchopoulos. As elsewhere, *La Vie d'Adèle* and *Blue Is the Warmest Colour* diverge: the focus on Adèle's careful cooking, her dancing, her contentious citation of Bob Marley as a social thinker are all strong and specific, while the cross-flirtations and jealousy between Adèle and Emma are bland and clichéd.

Were Emma to be renamed Michel, the film would proceed almost identically, especially since Emma's character has been rewritten as a familiar type from French cinema: the artist from the *haute bourgeoisie* who conquers women and discards them. Léa Seydoux does invest her

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Brahim Chioa
Vincent Maraval
Screenplay
Abdellatif Kechiche
Abdellatif Kechiche
Ghalya Lacroix
Freely inspired by
the graphic novel *Le bleu est une couleur chaude* by Julie Maroh
Director of Photography
Sofian El Fani
Editing
Camille Toubkis
Albertine Lastera
Ghalya Lacroix
Jean-Marie Lengelle

Sophie Brunet
Art Direction
Bahijja El Amrani
Michel Gionti
Julia Lemaire
Sylvain Phan
Coline Debee
Marie Charpentier
Zoe Goetgheluck
Sound Recordist
Jérôme Chenevoy
Costume Department
Paloma Garcia
Martens
Dorothee Lissac
Lucie Maggier
Sylvie Letellier

Fetene Ben Nasr
Roxane Guiga
©Wild Bunch,
Quat'sous Films,
France 2 Cinéma,
Scope Pictures,
RTBF (Télévision
belge), Vertigo Films
Production Companies
A Wild Bunch,
Quat'sous Films
production
In co-production with
France 2 Cinéma,
Scope Pictures,
RTBF (Télévision
belge), Vertigo Films

With the support of
Eurimages, Pictanova
and Conseil Régional
Nord-Pas-de-Calais in
partnership with CNC
With the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+,
France Télévisions
Made with the
support of Tax Shelter
du Gouvernement
fédéral belge via
SCOPE Invest

Cast
Léa Seydoux
Emma
Adèle Exarchopoulos

Adèle
Salim Kechiouche
Samir
Aurélien Recoing
Adèle's father
Catherine Salée
Adèle's mother
Benjamin Siksou
Antoine
Mona Walravens
Lise
Alma Jodorowski
Béatrice
Jérémie Laheurte
Thomas
Anne Loiret
Emma's mother
Benoît Pilot
Emma's stepfather

Sandor Funtek
Valentin

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film
Company

16,162 ft +8 frames

French theatrical title
La Vie d'Adèle
Chapitres 1 et 2

Northern France, the present. Adèle, a secondary-school pupil, is on her way to a date with fellow student Thomas when she catches sight of a girl with dyed blue hair. Adèle is disturbed to find herself fantasising about the girl, and is unable to have sex with Thomas. After she kisses another girl at school and is subsequently rejected by her, Adèle visits a gay club with school friend Valentin; she sees the blue-haired girl at a lesbian bar across the street. Her subsequent friendship with the girl, Emma, causes rows at school but develops into a sexual relationship. Graduating from school, Adèle, now living with Emma, trains as a primary school teacher and attempts to balance her working-class identity with Emma's bohemian art-school circle.

Emma's absorption in the art world leads Adèle to an affair with a male trainee teacher; when Emma discovers this, she and Adèle fight violently and Emma throws Adèle out. Adèle finds work as a teacher but continues to fantasise about Emma, revisiting their old meeting places. After three years, Emma – now involved with fellow artist Lise and raising her daughter – agrees to meet Adèle in a café but pulls away when Adèle initiates sexual contact. Emma invites Adèle to the opening of her exhibition, however, Adèle attends – but is uncomfortable to find Emma's nudes of her hanging in the gallery and to see Emma with Lise. Adèle leaves despite flirting with Emma's friend Salim, who attempts to follow her as she walks away.

Child's Pose

Director: Calin Peter Netzer
Certificate 15 112m 24s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

The monstrous mother has been one of the most elemental fictional tropes for so many centuries (Medea, Sycorax, Mrs Bates, Sophie Portnoy, Carrie's Margaret White, Mary Lee Johnston in *Precious*, and innumerable others) that director Calin Peter Netzer, writer Razvan Radulescu and lead actress Luminita Gheorghiu are setting themselves a daunting challenge when they aim to make a lasting impression with yet another.

But from the moment Cornelia Kerenes appears on screen complaining to her sister Olga about her thirtysomething son Barbu (Bogdan Dumitrache) and his allegedly unsuitable partner Carmen (Ilinca Goia), it's clear that this is the kind of role that middle-aged actresses traditionally kill for. Especially if, like Gheorghiu, they've so far been relegated to supporting roles – although she is one of the most familiar faces in Romanian New Wave cinema (she's worked with Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristi Puiu and, abroad, Michael Haneke), Cornelia is her first leading part.

It's a particularly difficult role to bring off because Cornelia could so easily come across as a grotesque caricature. She's dressed to the nines and immaculately coiffed (although her blonde hair looks suspiciously colour-matched), and every syllable she utters, every gesture she performs and every person she singles out for a one-to-one grilling has been chosen and calibrated for the primary purpose of ensuring that her vice-like maternal grip over the hapless Barbu continues well into his fourth decade and hopefully beyond.

An early scene in which Cornelia pumps their shared cleaner Clara for information about her son's lifestyle speaks volumes: one can imagine that Cornelia originally offered him Clara's services (naturally, at her expense) as a generous stress-relieving gesture. If her Bach cello ringtone doesn't already mark her out as a cultural snob, this is established beyond any doubt by her habit of not only buying Barbu improving literary works by recent Nobel laureates, such as Herta Müller and Orhan Pamuk, but then asking Clara follow-up questions about whether he's shown any sign of reading them. (When Cornelia later lets herself into Barbu's flat, it's clear that on Amazon Marketplace the books would easily qualify as 'like new'.)

It's little wonder that Barbu himself has ended up not merely desperately shy but also hopelessly neurotic. He has a particular phobia about germs, but it is not just microbial invasions that bother him: he's also less than happy about Cornelia rooting around his affairs. Despite being dismissed by her possible future mother-in-law as "that creature", the attractive, level-headed Carmen actually turns out to be an excellent catch – truth be told, a rather better one than Barbu, an opinion she seems to be coming round to herself. The scene in which Carmen patiently explains to Cornelia that in fact it's Barbu who doesn't want children, not her, has been criticised for dramatic implausibility (would Carmen really share quite this level of gynaecological detail with a woman she evidently can't stand?), but Carmen presumably knows



Florin Zamfirescu and Luminita Gheorghiu

better than anyone that extreme bluntness is the only tactic likely to work on someone as oblivious as Cornelia. This is, after all, a woman so grossly insensitive that she's prepared to tell recently bereaved parents, in an attempt to get Barbu off a manslaughter charge, "You have another child but I only have him." (He never says it outright, but Barbu's hangdog demeanour suggests that a few years in prison might not be an unattractive option, given the alternative.)

The bereavement in question provides the film's narrative motor: trying to overtake a car that's already travelling at the speed limit, Barbu has knocked down and killed 14-year-old Mihai Anghelie (the surname is common enough in Romania to banish suspicions of crude symbolism). Although Mihai was at least partly at fault for running across the road at night in the first place, there's little question that the charge against Barbu is likely to stick, and while it's a first offence, it may be compounded by the fact that he was speeding at the time. While Cornelia is only too happy to name-drop her links with influential political figures (many of whom are seen attending her 60th birthday party at the film's start) and to arrange for independent inspections of both the car and Barbu's bloodstream, she has fewer options when it comes to changing the official facts.

The central scene in which Cornelia tracks down and talks to key witness Dinu Laurentiu, the other driver involved in the accident, is perhaps the most queasily compelling in the

entire film, not least because Laurentiu proves to be just as much a cynical opportunist as she is. Played by Vlad Ivanov (the vile yet convincingly human abortionist in Cristian Mungiu's 2007 masterpiece *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days*), he sees through her from the start. Bluntly dismissing her initial flirtation ("I'm 30 going on 60"), he goes on to illustrate exactly what happened using makeshift props on a café table, establishing Barbu's guilt beyond any reasonable doubt – and then spelling out exactly how much power he holds and the price of his complicity.

Cornelia's final set piece is a lengthy, tear-stained, makeup-free monologue delivered to Mihai's grieving parents. It's hard to know what they make of her, since they've only just met her – they wouldn't even have heard her *Daily Mail*-style observation that the Anghelies live in "a better-looking house" than she was evidently expecting. But by this stage we know her too well to treat her defence with anything but the utmost cynicism. Is her offer to pay for a treat for Mihai's surviving sibling Dragos an impulsive gesture of generosity, or does she plan to become a surrogate aunt, inveigling herself more and more into his life as Barbu successfully extricates himself from hers? She's not saying, but the jury is clearly out.

As the Romanian New Wave enters its second decade, it's good to see that it's showing little sign of creative dissipation. Although he is not much known in Britain (*Child's Pose* is his first feature to secure UK distribution), Netzer was in fact one of its earliest luminaries, winning multiple prizes at Locarno for *Maria* (2003) and at Thessaloniki for *Medal of Honour* (2009) before bagging the Golden Bear at Berlin for this film (which was in part inspired by his own involvement in a similar tragedy). Radulescu's screenwriting work has been more visible, via Cristi Puiu's *The Death of*

He never says it outright, but Barbu's hangdog demeanour suggests that a few years in prison might not be an unattractive option



Couch trip: Bogdan Dumitrache as the downtrodden Barbu



Bad-ass mother: Luminita Gheorghiu as Cornelia

Mr. Lazarescu (2005, in which Gheorghiu played the concerned paramedic) and Radu Muntean's *The Paper Will Be Blue* (2006) and *Tuesday, After Christmas* (2010) – the last of these in particular showed a keen appreciation of the intolerable strains that can occur within the family unit when two of its members have a fundamentally different attitude towards their lives.

Cinematographer Andrei Butica shoots the whole thing in handheld Scope, not necessarily to the film's advantage – the wide framing gives Cornelia plenty of opportunities to invade the frame (she's rarely off the screen) but the attendant wobble can be distracting as the camera swings round to catch yet another telling detail. But Gheorghiu's performance, the kind of all-consuming human whirlwind that Anna Magnani used to incarnate on a regular basis, is so compelling that we're far more likely to be fixated on her than on the edges of the frame. Appalling though Cornelia's behaviour undoubtedly is, it's driven by the most primal of all animal instincts, exacerbated by an all too palpable fear of eking out her days in an empty nest – and Gheorghiu never lets us forget it. 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Calin Peter Netzer
Ada Solomon
Screenplay
Razvan Radulescu
Calin Peter Netzer
Photography
Andrei Butica
Editing
Dana Lucretia Bunescu

Production Designer
Malina Ionescu
Sound
Cristian Tarnovetchi
Costume Designer
Irina Marinescu

Production Companies
A Parada Film
production in
co-production with

Hai-Hui Entertainment
With the support of
Romanian Centre
of Cinematography,
Media Programme
of the European
Union, Odyssey
Communication, BV
McCann Erikson,
Real Top Media,
Etno Media, Teleclub
With the participation

of HBO Romania
A film by Calin
Peter Netzer

Cast
Luminita Gheorghiu
Cornelia
Bogdan Dumitrache
Barbu
Ilina Goia
Carmen

Natasa Raab
Olga Cerchez
Florin Zamfirescu
Aurelian Fagarasanu
Vlad Ivanov
Dinu Laurentiu

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited
10,116 ft +0 frames
Romanian
theatrical title
Pozitia copilului

Bucharest, the present. Successful architect Cornelia Kerenes complains to her sister Olga that her thirtysomething son Barbu shows her insufficient respect, not least in his choice of partner (Carmen already has a daughter, but allegedly refuses to bear a child for Barbu) and his refusal to attend her lavish 60th birthday party. She and Barbu share the same cleaner, Clara, whom Cornelia pumps for information about Barbu's lifestyle. When Barbu kills teenager Mihai Angheliiu in a road accident, Cornelia rushes to the police station; she tries to have Barbu's statement changed to make it appear that he wasn't speeding (despite the sworn statement of Dinu Laurentiu, the driver he overtook) and arranges independent blood and urine tests. Barbu is in shock, so Cornelia

opportunistically moves him into her flat and begins some intensive mothering. Letting herself into Barbu's flat to retrieve his things, she inspects it thoroughly (an angry Barbu later orders her to return his keys). Cornelia persuades Laurentiu to change his statement. Carmen tells Cornelia that it's Barbu who has gone to extreme lengths to avoid impregnating her, and that she's leaving him. Before driving to visit the bereaved Angheliiu, Barbu tells Cornelia that he wants more independence. Cornelia and Carmen go to the Angheliiu's house to plead Barbu's case with Mihai's grieving parents, who sympathise but ask them not to attend the funeral. Barbu has a private conversation with Mihai's father, and the two shake hands. Cornelia starts up the car.



Raw deal: middleman Westray (Brad Pitt) makes plans with the Counsellor (Michael Fassbender) in Ridley Scott's film of a Cormac McCarthy screenplay

The Counsellor

USA/United Kingdom 2013

Director: Ridley Scott

Certificate 18 117m 29s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Spoiler alert: this review reveals several major plot twists

As Chekhov famously remarked, "If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one it should be fired. Otherwise don't put it there." Ridley Scott and his screenwriter Cormac McCarthy follow Chekhov's dictum to the letter. Early on in *The Counsellor*, flamboyant bon vivant Reiner (Javier Bardem) describes to his El Paso lawyer friend the Counsellor (Michael Fassbender) an ingenious mechanised garrotting device called a *bolito*. It's slipped over the victim's head, and a small electric motor at the side steadily tightens a wire around the throat until the carotid artery is severed. It can't be removed or stopped – death is inevitable. And in the last few minutes of the film we see just such a device used on drug-dealing middleman Westray (Brad Pitt) in the incongruous surroundings of a daytime street in the City of London. Westray desperately tries to impede the *bolito* by slipping his fingers under it, and as he collapses on the pavement with blood spurting from his throat we're granted – just to enhance the effect of the scene – a close-

up of his outflung hand, the fingers sliced off.

Likewise, at an earlier juncture Westray, trying to impress on the Counsellor the kind of people he's getting involved with, gives him a graphic account of a snuff movie one cartel made for a rich client in which a teenage girl was decapitated before the client fucked the headless corpse. "The point is, Counsellor," he adds, "you may think there are things that these people would simply be incapable of. There are not." So when at the end of the movie the Counsellor, holed up in a Ciudad Juárez flophouse, receives a video disc with '*Hola*' scrawled on it, he collapses on the floor weeping in anguish. He has no need to view the disc to know what it shows – and, since we've seen the headless body of his beloved fiancée Laura (Penélope Cruz) dumped out on to a garbage tip, neither have we.

Westray's remarks aren't the only time the Counsellor is warned that he's moving into territory more dangerous than he could imagine, and that he's totally unsuited to dealing with. "If you pursue this road that you've embarked upon," Reiner predicts when he first proposes their deal, "you'll eventually come to moral decisions that will take you completely by surprise – ones you didn't see coming at all." Despite which he persists, precipitating along with his own ruin the violent death of most of his associates and of the woman he loves. As a Mexican police chief whose help he seeks tells him, "You continue to deny

the reality of the world you're in." His job title – we never learn the character's name – is highly ironic: not only does he rarely seem to counsel anybody, but this is a man who seems quite incapable of taking advice on his own account.

Right from the outset, we come to realise, the Counsellor has unknowingly crossed a border between the comfortable world he's accustomed to and one in which no rules apply – or none that he can comprehend. Worse, it's a border that can only be crossed in one direction; there's no going back. "The world in which you seek to undo your mistakes," the *jefe* explains, "is not the world in which they were made. You are at a crossroads and here you think to choose. But here there is no choosing. There is only accepting. The choosing was done a long time ago."

The concept of a border between the relatively civilised, ordered world in which most of us think we live, and a world in which there are no rules and the most unspeakable things will be done simply because they can be done, is central to the work of McCarthy, whose first original film script this is. The three novels – *All the Pretty Horses*, *The Crossing* and *Cities of the Plain* – that brought him to international fame have been grouped together as 'The Border Trilogy' and in all of them (as in his earlier *Blood Meridian*) the US-Mexican border stands as a metaphor for this key dichotomy. In Mexico (or at least in McCarthy's vision of it) the dreams and aspirations that



Given its blacker-than-hell world of limitless violence, it scarcely matters that for most of the film it's hard to tell who's double-, triple- or quadruple-crossing whom and why

maybe seemed harmless enough a few dozen miles to the north must be paid for in blood, pain and death. (The vision isn't so far from the truth, as we're reminded when the Counsellor stumbles on a street demonstration demanding justice for the hundreds of young women murdered or disappeared in Chihuahua State in recent years.)

Given this blacker-than-hell world of perpetual treachery and limitless violence, it scarcely matters that for most of the film it's hard to tell just who's double-, triple- or quadruple-crossing whom and why. All that counts is the result: that the consignment of drugs that sets out from Ciudad Juárez concealed in a septic-tank truck, having been hijacked two or three times en route, duly arrives at its destination in Chicago; that by then several of those involved are dead, or soon will be; that the Counsellor has lost everything except – as yet – his life; and that one person, Reiner's erstwhile girlfriend Malkina, has gained everything.

Malkina (Cameron Diaz), svelte and feline, her smile like a sliver of ice, first appears lounging in a folding chair on the Texan prairie at sunset, watching two cheetahs hunt jack-rabbits while Reiner mixes her a martini. Her identification with the predators is absolute; later, as she indulges in poolside girly chat with Laura, we see that she has a cheetah-print tattoo extending from her shoulder to the back of her thigh. And in the film's final scene, lunching with her banker Michael (Goran Visnjic) in London, having engineered the death of her lover, of Laura and of several others, she names as her sole regret the loss of the two big cats. "To see a quarry killed with elegance," she observes, "it's moving to me."

In the title role, Fassbender channels a hint of the solipsism of his sex-addict in *Shame* into his portrayal of a man rather too enamoured of his own glitzy lifestyle and not as smart as he thinks he is. ("They know that you're stupid," Westray comments, referring again to the faceless cartels. "They just don't know how stupid.") He's backed by a 24-carat cast that includes, along with Bardem (sporting another notably eccentric hairstyle after *No Country for Old Men*, this time with his dark locks coruscating about his head as if he's been electrocuted), Diaz, Pitt and Cruz, a rich roster of cameos: Visnjic, Bruno Ganz as a philosophical Amsterdam diamond merchant, Rosie Perez as a jailbird who's seemingly the Counsellor's only client and Rubén Blades as the fatalistic police chief.

Given how completely it exemplifies

McCarthy's sardonic, pessimistic and mercilessly retributive world-view (worth recalling that he was raised Catholic), it's tempting to treat *The Counsellor* largely as his film. But he's teamed up with Ridley Scott, a protean director who can switch seamlessly from the explicit sensual heat of the opening bedroom scene between Laura and the Counsellor, to the virtuoso machine-gun editing of a scene where a motorcyclist is decapitated at 200 mph on a desert road, to the Counsellor's inexorable descent into the City of Dreadful Night that is Juárez, its dark tawdry streets often recalling *Blade Runner*. Between them, Scott and McCarthy have created a film that in less accomplished hands could have slumped into melodrama, but that retains the grim humour, and the granitic implacability, of a classic morality tale. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Ridley Scott
Nick Wechsler
Steve Schwartz
Paula Mae Schwartz
Written by
Cormac McCarthy
Director of Photography
Dariusz Wolski
Editor
Pietro Scalia
Production Designer
Arthur Max
Music
Daniel Pemberton
Production Sound Mixer
Simon Hayes
Costume Designer
Janty Yates
Stunt Co-ordinator
Rob Inch

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Company, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain)
Production Companies
Fox 2000 Pictures presents a Scott Free/Nick Wechsler/Chockstone Pictures production
A Ridley Scott film
Made in association with TSG Entertainment and Ingenious Media
Produced in association with Big Screen Productions
Executive Producers
Cormac McCarthy
Mark Huffam
Michael Schaefer
Michael Costigan

Cast
Michael Fassbender
Counsellor
Penélope Cruz
Laura
Cameron Diaz

Malkina
Javier Bardem
Reiner
Brad Pitt
Westray
Bruno Ganz
diamond dealer
Rosie Perez
Ruth
Sam Spruell
wireman
Toby Kebbell
Tony
Edgar Ramírez
priest
Rubén Blades
Jefe
Natalie Dormer
blonde
Goran Visnjic
banker

Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
20th Century Fox International

10,573 ft +8 frames

US theatrical title
The Counsellor

Present day Texas. The Counsellor, an advocate working out of El Paso, buys a diamond ring to propose to his girlfriend Laura. To finance his expensive tastes he sets up a drug-smuggling deal with his nightclub-owner friend Reiner: a shipment of heroin hidden in a septic-tank truck going from Ciudad Juárez to Chicago, funded by a Mexican cartel. Reiner's girlfriend Malkina shows interest in the deal. The Counsellor meets Reiner's associate Westray, who's facilitating the deal, then visits his client Ruth in jail, and agrees to pay \$400 to free her son following a speeding conviction. Unbeknown to him, Ruth's son is involved in the deal; two members of a rival cartel kill him on the road, and subsequently steal the truck. Two other cartel members, posing as cops, kill the hijackers and in turn take the truck. Westray tells the Counsellor the original cartel now want \$20m from him.

Reiner is gunned down in his car. Realising Laura may be targeted, the Counsellor arranges to meet her in a hotel in Boise, Idaho, but she never shows, having been snatched at El Paso airport. The Counsellor flies to Ciudad Juárez to consult a Mexican lawyer, Hernandez, but gets little comfort. The truck arrives in Chicago. Westray flies to London, taking with him a computer giving bank details of where the missing funds are stashed. He's killed in the street by assassins working for Malkina, who secures the computer. Laura's body is dumped on a rubbish tip and a video disc is delivered to the Counsellor, who weeps helplessly. Malkina tells her banker she plans to move to Hong Kong.



Love and other drugs: the Counsellor with his fiancée Laura (Penélope Cruz)



Life's a beach: Marine Vacth stars in François Ozon's provocative tale about a 17-year-old girl from a well-off family who decides to become a prostitute

Jeune & jolie

France 2013

Director: François Ozon

Certificate 18 93m 34s

See Feature
on page 48

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau
Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Taking its title from a defunct French magazine for adolescent girls, François Ozon's new feature *Jeune & jolie* ("Young and Beautiful") confirms his reputation as the gifted maker of elegant and entertaining films on risqué subjects. In this respect, his tale of a gorgeous adolescent girl from a well-off family who inexplicably decides to try being a prostitute does not disappoint. The film is accomplished, well paced and provoking. There is only one problem with it: its offensive and sadly stereotyped view of female teenage prostitution.

We are introduced to 17-year-old Isabelle (Marine Vacth) on holiday in the South of France, surrounded by her sympathetic, open-minded family: her mother Sylvie (Géraldine Pailhas), stepfather Patrick (Frédéric Pierrot) and young brother Victor (Fantin Ravat); we also meet their close friends Véro (Nathalie Richard) and Peter (Djedje Apali) and their children. Isabelle is ravishingly beautiful and her parents are cool enough to encourage her to bring her boyfriends home. After the holidays we discover that home is a large and comfortable Parisian flat, school the elite Lycée Henri-IV, where pupils discuss a Rimbaud poem in sophisticated terms. All this, of course, enhances the shock of Isabelle selling herself for sex. In the first half of the film (which is divided into the seasons of the year,

each marked by a Françoise Hardy song on the soundtrack) we follow Isabelle as 'Léa', meeting middle-aged or older male clients through a website, mostly in luxury hotels. Among them, the urbane Georges (Johan Leysen) becomes a favourite and she sees him several times, until he dies suddenly from a heart attack while they are having sex, leading to Isabelle being found out by the police, who in turn tell her parents.

In its representation of the tricky topic of prostitution, *Jeune & jolie* ostensibly stays clear of either moralistic judgement or sociological exposé, a stance familiar in French auteur cinema, always keen to avoid the 'taint' of sociology. Here Ozon echoes Jean-Luc Godard's 1962 *Vivre sa vie* and Luis Buñuel's 1967 *Belle de jour*, as well as Malgoska Szumowska's more recent *Elles* (2011). While we see Isabelle at home and at school in everyday realistic mode, the sex scenes with clients are more distanced. Elliptically presented as a series of almost bland transactions, they are only briefly and modestly explicit. The film seems more interested in showing us Isabelle's routine – her changing from everyday student garb to sexy short skirts, high heels and makeup, for instance. *Jeune & jolie* stubbornly refuses to supply any conventional explanation for Isabelle's decision. Various leads are teasingly offered and then systematically disproved. So, Isabelle's summertime sexual initiation with Felix (Lucas Prisor) was botched, but surely not traumatic enough to explain her subsequent actions, especially as we see her discussing sex rather freely with her brother Victor, both before and after. Her best friend at school, Claire (Jeanne Ruff), talks of a girl prostituting herself to buy a Prada bag, but Isabelle hides her money in a wardrobe without ever spending it, the film thus disposing of any economic angle on the

matter. As for a psychoanalytical explanation, when Isabelle is obliged to take up therapy, Ozon delights in showing the – real-life – therapist Serge Hefez asking leading questions about her absent (divorced) father, only to dismiss the Oedipal complex as a red herring.

Fun as these sophisticated games are, we are left with a completely impenetrable heroine, yet another version of feminine 'mystery', all the more so since Isabelle doesn't confide in anyone, not even Claire. Even the insistence on the theme of voyeurism in the early part of the film – where, for example, we see Isabelle magically step out of herself to watch Felix laboriously making love to her – does not seem relevant once she starts prostituting herself. While Ozon maintains our interest in Isabelle's actions through skilful pacing of the story, her opacity means that as a character she becomes at best indifferent and at worst unconvincing. Like Isabelle's appalled mother, we are left asking, "Why?"

The 'explanation' the film prefers, as exposed in its final scene, is also the most contentious: that Isabelle is fulfilling a feminine fantasy. After she has supposedly stopped turning tricks, she meets Georges's widow Alice (Charlotte Rampling). The two women visibly bond. Alice takes Isabelle to the room where she used to meet Georges and tells her, "If I'd been bold enough, I would have prostituted myself." The scene has an eerie quality, reinforced by Rampling's unwavering gaze and the hint that it may be happening only in Isabelle's mind. Yet Ozon has unambiguously (and unwisely) reinforced its message off screen. "It's a fantasy of many women to do prostitution [...] the fact to be paid to have sex is something which is very obvious in feminine sexuality," he told the *Hollywood Reporter*, insisting to the disbelieving (female) interviewer, "There is a kind



A kiss before dying: Isabelle with one of her older male clients Georges (Johan Leysen)

of passivity that women are looking for. That's why the scene with Rampling is very important."

Even if we are willing to leave aside the self-serving patriarchal assumption that 'women' are yearning for passivity, the fact remains that the film portrays a teenage girl who does prostitute herself, rather than an older woman who dreams about it. And the sex scenes reinforce the film's status as patriarchal fantasy, erasing the physical reality of a teenage girl having sex with old men. They are presented in a series of aesthetically pleasing, smooth shots – as aesthetically pleasing and smooth as Vacht's exquisite body

– while the male punters are much less on display physically. The only one we properly see naked is the extremely fit and handsome Georges; no rolls of fat or sagging flesh here.

Isabelle's opacity means that as a character she becomes at best indifferent, at worst unconvincing. We are left asking, 'Why?'

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Eric Altmayer
Nicolas Altmayer

Written by
François Ozon

Director of Photography
Pascal Marti

Editor
Laure Gardette

Production Designer
Katia Wyszczok

Music
Philippe Rombi
Sound
Brigitte Taillandier
Costume Designer
Pascaline Chavanne

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Mars Film, France
2 Cinéma, Foz
Production Companies

Mandarin Cinéma
presents in
co-production with
Mars Films, France
2 Cinéma, Foz
With the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+,
France Télévisions
In association with
La Banque Postale
Image 6, Cofimage
24, Manon 3, Cofinova

9, Palatine Etoile 10
With the support of La
Région Ile-de-France,
in partnership
with the CNC

Cast
Marine Vacht
Isabelle
Géraldine Pailhas
Sylvie

Frédéric Pierrot
Patrick
Charlotte Rampling
Alice
Johan Leysen
Georges
Fantin Ravat
Victor
Nathalie Richard
Véro
Djedje Apali
Peter

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Lionsgate UK
8,421ft +0 frames

The South of France, the present. On holiday with her mother, stepfather and young brother Victor, 17-year-old Isabelle loses her virginity with a German boy, Felix; it is a disappointing experience. Back home in Paris, Isabelle returns to school but also starts working as an occasional prostitute under the name of Léa, arranging rendezvous through a website. She keeps her activities hidden from everyone around her, including her best friend at school. She visits a variety of clients in expensive hotels. They are middle-aged or older men; a couple of them are rude or brusque but most are pleasant enough, in particular Georges, whom she visits several times. At the theatre with her parents, Isabelle sees Georges with another woman

(his daughter). She discovers that her mother may be having an affair with Peter, a family friend. When Georges dies of a heart attack while having sex with Isabelle, she flees the hotel but the police trace her and tell her shocked parents. She is forced to undergo therapy. Her mother is distraught but others around her are either suspicious or titillated by what she has done. She has an affair with Alex, a boy in her class, but it is short-lived. Georges's widow Alice arranges to meet Isabelle in the hotel room where the latter used to see Georges; Alice tells Isabelle that she regrets not having been brave enough to prostitute herself. However, the final shot suggests that Isabelle may have imagined this encounter.

Ozon is on surer ground with his familiar sardonic look at the bourgeois family – something he has had in his sights since his first feature *Sitcom* in 1997. While Isabelle's motivations remain obscure, her actions illuminate the compromises and lies of the adults around her – the fact that her mother may be having an affair with the couple's best friend Peter, for instance. The film also, in a minor key, points out men's contradictory, misogynistic, response to female prostitution: from the evidently aroused stepfather who crassly ventures that Isabelle's beauty somehow explains it to the client who tells her "Once a prostitute, always a prostitute!"

As in his last film *In the House* (2012), Ozon is at ease with adolescents. Here he captures both their curiosity about sex and their craving for romance. Isabelle's brief liaison with her classmate Alex (Laurent Delbecq) is sealed with a shot of them on the Pont des Arts, its railings festooned with lovers' padlocks, a moment that is both clichéd and romantic, like the Françoise Hardy songs. In this respect, the scene in which Isabelle and her classmates analyse the Rimbaud poem 'Romance' ("You aren't serious when you are 17") is a little obvious in its intent but redeemed by the freshness of the performances, including some from non-professional actors. In any case, as is also usual with Ozon, the film is superbly acted throughout, in particular by Géraldine Pailhas as Isabelle's hurt and confused mother and indeed by Vacht herself, a former model blessed with both androgynous beauty and charismatic screen presence. It's a shame all this talent is put to the service of a prettied-up vision of teenage prostitution that shows none of the economic, social and physical realities of paid-for sex, and offensively perpetuates a vision of femininity that is neither young nor beautiful. **S**

Baggage Claim

USA/Australia/United Kingdom 2013
Director: David E. Talbert
Certificate 12A 96m 21s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

"Why do you need a man to define you?" As posed to Montana Moore (Paula Patton), the late-twentysomething protagonist of *Baggage Claim*, it's a very good question. The answer – which goes unspoken for the duration of David E. Talbert's film – is that unless she's either chasing or fending off potential boyfriends, Montana isn't a particularly likeable or interesting person. For instance, we're never quite sure why her fellow flight-attendant BFFs – sassy Gail (Jill Scott) and swishy Sam (Adam Brody) – are so determined to help her find a husband in advance of her younger sister's wedding, unless perhaps it's to stave off the crushing boredom of having to make small talk about her latest disastrous date.

Their plan involves using their contacts in the airline industry to reconnect Montana with her more eligible exes one domestic flight at a time – a laboured conceit that leads to multiple montages of Patton barrelling through airport lounges to make a last-second connection. The frequent-flyer-as-dating-metaphor thing is played out after *Up in the Air* (2009) but *Baggage Claim* is actually worse in the scenes where it touches down. In trying to interrogate the gap between his heroine's unrealistic single-girl romantic fantasies and the compromises of real life, all Talbert really does is offer up tableaux of vicarious wish fulfilment, as a veritable murderer's row of handsome, eligible African-American suitors line up to be put in their place by a woman discovering heretofore untapped reserves of self-esteem.

The only grace notes come courtesy of Derek Luke, as Montana's neighbour-slash-childhood sweetheart Will – an idealised homebody figure (he cooks, he cleans, he loves kung-fu movies) given probably more shading than he deserves by an actor who refuses to play the role on cruise control. Luke's presence seems also to



Plane silly: Adam Brody, Paula Patton, Jill Scott

relax Patton, who spends the other scenes trying to harness some sort of early-Meg Ryan manic screwball energy. (A scene where Montana hides in a dumpster to spy on a philandering lover generates more sympathy for the actor than for the character.) Most of the other actors don't have even a fighting chance against the screenplay, especially Taye Diggs, who's tasked with playing a transparently odious congressional candidate. He can't make the role amusing, though he does end up as the butt of the film's sole edgy joke – a tossed-off line about "not trusting black Republicans".

Elsewhere the film is rife with clichés, right down to the double whammy of the heartfelt-speech-that-earns-a-slow-clap and the mad-dash-to-meet-a-lover-at-the-airport – set pieces that Talbert fails to invest with any urgency. He doesn't seem to be sweating little things like originality or believability, and the laziness of his approach may well appeal to viewers looking for a cosily mediocre genre exercise. But if Montana can learn to respect herself and not settle for less, so even the most desperate romantic-comedy junkies can resolve to do better than *Baggage Claim*. **S**

Battle of the Year

USA 2013
Director: Benson Lee
Certificate 12A 109m 31s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Battle of the Year is ostensibly a performance-centred hip-hop dance film in the still popular vein of *You Got Served* and the *Step Up* franchise. Described by director Benson Lee in pre-production interviews as not "your usual urban dance film that has a street kid falling in love with a ballerina bullshit", *Battle of the Year* inexplicably offers only one choreographed, start-to-finish group dance. There are sporadic rehearsal montages cut into a series of disconnected physical movements, but most of *Battle of the Year* is a poky drama in which former basketball coach Jason Blake (Josh Holloway) repeatedly harangues a 'Dream Team' (cf the 1992 American Olympic basketball champions) of egoistical dancers. The kind of American male who credits 'Coach' with teaching him formative values of hard (team)work and perseverance – or any petty fascist disciplinarian convinced they're important moulders of men – will thrill to Blake shouting not once but twice, "There is no 'I' in team."

No US team has taken first place at the real Battle of the Year breakdancing competition, held annually in Montpellier, France, since 1998. Here, Blake has been hired to whip the team into shape, putting paternalistic discipline to use in service of a kind of benevolent nationalism. "They're expecting ugly Americans," he says. "Let's show them who we really are." The film demeans its cast of real dancers by turning them into conduits for constant product placement ("This is the new Sony tablet – it's the future!") and equally flat life lessons. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Beau Flynn Tripp Vinson Amy Lo Written by Brin Hill Chris Parker Inspired by the documentary <i>Planet B-Boy</i> by Benson Lee Director of Photography Michael Barrett Editor Peter S. Elliot Dance Sequences Edited by Harvey White Production Designer Chris Cornwell Music Christopher Lennertz Sound Mixer Douglas Axtell Costume Designer Soyon An Choreography Rich + Tone Talauega ©Screen Gems, Inc. Production Companies Screen Gems presents a	Contrafilm Production This film has benefited from the Tax Credit for Foreign Film Production in France Executive Producers Will Packer Glenn S. Gainer Rich + Tone Talauega Cast Josh Holloway Jason Blake Laz Alonso Dante Graham Josh Peck Franklyn Caity Lotz Stacy Flipz Flipz Jon Do-Knock Cruz Do-Knock Anis Cheurfa Anis Jesse Casper Brown Rebel Kid David Kid Sawandi Wilson Sniper	Richard Maguire Lil Adonis Steve Terada Sight Luis Rosado Bambino Joshua Lee 'Milky' Ayers Mayhem Sammy Soto Samo Richie 'Abstrak' Soto Abbstar Gil Brace-Wessel Gillatine Terrence J Sway Calloway themselves Chris Brown Rooster Dolby Digital/ Datasat/ SDDS In Colour [L85-I] Some screenings presented in 3D Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing 9,856ft +8 frames
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Present-day US. Hip-hop entrepreneur Dante sponsors a breakdancing team to represent the US in the annual Battle of the Year contest in Montpellier, France. Dante hires former basketball coach Jason Blake to turn around their losing record. In three months, Blake assembles a new team and leads them to second place in the contest.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Steven J. Wolfe David E. Talbert Screenplay David E. Talbert Based on his novel Director of Photography Anastas Michos Film Editor Troy Takaki Production Designer Dina Lipton Music Aaron Zigman Sound Mixer Walter Anderson Costume Designer Maya Lieberman ©Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in all territories except Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain) ©TCF Hungary Film Rights Exploitation Limited Liability Company, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in	Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain) Production Companies Fox Searchlight Pictures presents a 260 Degrees/ Sneak Preview Entertainment production A David E. Talbert film Made in association with TSG Entertainment and Ingenious Media Produced in association with Big Screen Productions Executive Producer Lyn Sisson-Talbert Cast Paula Patton Montana Moore Derek Luke William Wright Taye Diggs Langston Jill Scott Gail Boris Kodjoe Graham Tremaine Neverson Damon Adam Brody	Sam Jennifer Lewis Catherine Ned Beatty Mr Donaldson Lauren London Sheree Tia Mowry Janine La La Anthony Tanya Christina Milian Taylor Affion Crockett Cedric Terrence J fiancé Rickey Smiley Calvin Thomas Miles Frankie Djimon Hounsou Quinton Dolby Digital/ Datasat/ SDDS In Colour [L85-I] Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK) 8,671 ft +8 frames
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US, the present. Beautiful flight attendant Montana worries that she will never meet the man of her dreams. When she finds herself without a date for her younger sister's upcoming wedding, her fellow flight attendants Gail and Sam devise a plan to reconnect her with several of her ex-boyfriends by booking her alongside them on a series of domestic flights. However, Montana's exes all display the same traits that led her to break up with them in the first place. Montana tells her troubles to her childhood friend and next-door neighbour William. When Montana sees William's girlfriend on a flight with another man, she threatens to tell William.

At a hotel bar, Montana meets handsome millionaire Quinton, who used to be a regular passenger on her route; he offers her a chance to travel the world first-class as his companion. Returning home, Montana quarrels with William, who has broken up with his girlfriend and is frustrated that Montana is compromising her dreams. Montana admits at the wedding rehearsal dinner that she needs to get to know herself better before she can be with somebody else; her speech convinces her sister to put off the wedding until after college. Montana turns down Quinton's offer, and returns the diamond bracelet he'd sent her. She opens her Christmas present from William, which includes a plane ticket to Paris. She rushes to the airport to intercept him before the plane takes off. They bump into each other at the departure gate and William gives her an engagement ring.

Breakfast with Jonny Wilkinson

United Kingdom 2013, Director: Simon Sprackling

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Directed with all the verve of a doomed sitcom pilot, this adaptation of Chris England's comic stage play is a crass, queasily claustrophobic affair disguised as harmless – if nakedly opportunistic – nostalgia. Looking back fondly to a moment of national sporting triumph – the England rugby team's 2003 World Cup win – it aims for a cosily affable tone but is, to a borderline-surreal degree, tone deaf to how objectionable and bizarre its characters' behaviour really is. It's hard to pick a least palatable element, but it's a toss-up between rugger brute Nigel Lindsay's apparently comic phone ranting at his pregnant wife ("Get on with it! You were the one who wanted the little fucker!") and the horrible subplot involving a woman's coercion into having sex with a teenager.

As the umpteenth can of Foster's is indelicately thrust in front of the camera, one begins to wonder whether the whole thing is in fact an elaborate – if terribly misguided – lager commercial. ☹



Try harder: *Breakfast with Jonny Wilkinson*

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Rob Perren
Written by
Chris England
Based on his original stage play
Cinematography
Jonathan Iles
Editor
Ian Baigent
Production Design
David Endley
Original Music
Andy Coles
Sound Recordist
Henry Milliner
Costume Design
Lydia Hardiman

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Production Company
Rob Perren presents a Future Leisure film
Executive Producers
Caroline Dickens
Jan Perren
Terry Braganza

Cast
George MacKay
Jake
Norman Pace
Dave
Beth Cordingley
Nina
Chris England
Exley
Gina Varela

Lena
Nigel Lindsay
Nigel
Michael Beckley
Matt

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Miracle Communications/
Future Leisure

England, 2003. GreyHawks Rugby Club chairman Dave hosts a live screening of the World Cup Final, which is being played in Australia. Only a handful of people arrive. These include club captain Nigel, star player Jake and loudmouth Australian coach Matt. It transpires that Dave's campaign to be re-elected chairman has been sabotaged by rival Matt. Over the course of the game, Matt's various ploys – including colluding with a muckraking journalist and attempting to embroil Dave in a sex scandal – are undone. Shortly after England win the final, Dave, suffering from illness and disgraced by the revelation that he scuppered Jake's big move to Newcastle Falcons, hands the reins to Nina, captain of the women's team.

Bring Me the Head of the Machine Gun Woman

Chile/USA 2013, Director: Ernesto Díaz Espinoza
Certificate 18 73m 25s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

With the distressed look of such retro-drive-in items as *Machete* and *Hobo with a Shotgun* (both spinoffs from *Grindhouse*) and the onscreen mission levels and game scores of *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World*, this cheerfully violent/romantic genre picture, described as LatinXploitation by writer-director Ernesto Díaz Espinoza, is at least doubly removed from real life. Striding about in fetish gear, laden with firearms, Fernanda Urrejola's game-avatar heroine is a self-evident fantasy figure, though the film at least has an emotional centre in timid, game-loving, mother-dominated Santiago, whose cocky assumption that proven skill with a joystick will translate into real gun-wielding prowess makes for some comic stretches but is proven correct in a final assault on a gangster's lair.

Too brief to outstay its welcome – this is a rare grindhouse homage that plays out at the Roger Corman-approved running time of 75 minutes rather than piling on an extra reel of self-indulgent cameos and footnote eccentricities – Espinoza's film has fair-only action scenes and relies a little too much on the hangdog self-pity of Matias Oviedo's out-of-his-depth protagonist. It seems for a while that Santiago will learn his lesson and pay attention to his mother, but his experiences in the world of Machine Gun Woman – which include having sex with her after he's pulled a bullet out of her side – just convince him that his videogame fantasies are real. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Nicolás Moisés
Ibieta Alemparte
Written by
Ernesto Díaz Espinoza
Director of Photography
Nico
[i.e. Nicolás Moisés Ibieta Alemparte]
Edited by
Ernesto Díaz Espinoza
Nicolás Moisés Ibieta Alemparte

Production Designer
Nicolás Oyarc
Music
Rocco
Sound
Yanislav Ostoic
Costume Designers
Caro de Maria
Gabriela Calvete

©[no company given]
Production Companies
LatinXploitation, Too Much Films, Moisés Motion Pictures
In association with

Ronnoc, Salaverde, El Cachafaz, Filmsonido, Lastarria 90
LatinXploitation present a production of George Vonkorrning and Derek Rundell
A film by Ernesto Díaz Espinoza
Executive Producer
George Vonkorrning

Cast
Fernanda Urrejola
Machine Gun Woman
Matias Oviedo
Santiago Fernandez
Jorge Alis
Che Longana
Sofia Garcia
Shadeline Soto
Alex Rivera
Flavio
Felipe Avello
Johnny Medina
Pato Pimienta
Patito, the concierge
Francisca Castillo
mother
Miguel Angel de Luca
Panguano

Daniel Antivilo
El Tronador
Jaime Omenaca
Bracoli

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Clear Vision

6,607ft +8 frames

Chilean theatrical title
Traiganme la cabeza de la mujer metralleta

Chile, present day. DJ Santiago is ordered by Argentine gangster Che Longana to capture or kill bounty hunter Machine Gun Woman, who has been slaughtering his minions. The inept Santiago, an avid videogame player, catches up with Machine Gun Woman but is smitten with her. Che kidnaps Santiago's mother, and the DJ brings in a wounded Machine Gun Woman – only to return after his mother is free and help the bounty hunter kill Che. Machine Gun Woman takes off, and Santiago tries to follow.

Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2

USA 2013, Directors: Cody Cameron, Kris Pearn
Certificate U 94m 40s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

After a summer glutted with solid but often dispiriting next-chapters in animation franchises, Cody Cameron and Kris Pearn's zany, visually inventive sequel to 2009's 50s-style sci-fi spoof provides some welcome relief.

Unabashedly silly in its humour ("There's a leak in the boat" raises a laugh twice by revealing... a leak), it retains the sharp-angled style, Looney Tunes elasticity and kinetic feel of its predecessor, though its cutely anthropomorphised Minion-style 'foodimals' run counter to the original's anti-engineered-food message. Revelling in a lushly coloured *Jurassic Park*-cum-*Avatar* setting teeming with surreal 3D-snapping 'tacodiles' and cheeseburger spiders, the film sends a playful but relentless energy coursing through gag-packed frames.

The uniformly high-quality voice work goes at a similar clip, Bill Hader's goofball hero and Neil Patrick Harris's inquisitive monkey Steve investing ceaseless food puns with charm. Granted, there's nothing revolutionary about the script's 'be true to your friends and your food' message. But the film's sly spoofing of the Apple/Google-style caffeinated corporate zealotry of the all-powerful Live Corp (including the distinctly Steve Jobsian new-age vibe of villain Chester V) gives it a smart edge, along with an artful abundance of glancing film homages. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Kirk Bodyfelt
Pam Marsden
Screenplay
John Francis Daley
Jonathan M. Goldstein
Erica Rivinoja

Story
Phil Lord
Christopher Miller
Erica Rivinoja
Inspired by the book *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* written by Judi Barrett and illustrated by Ron Barrett

Editor
Robert Fisher Jr
Production Designer
Justin K. Thompson
Music
Mark Mothersbaugh
Sound Designer
John Pospisil
Senior Animation Supervisor
Peter Nash
Imagery and Animation

Sony Pictures Imageworks Inc.
Sony Pictures Imageworks
Canada Inc.

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Production Companies
Columbia Pictures presents a Sony Pictures Animation film
Executive Producers
Phil Lord
Christopher Miller

Voice Cast
Bill Hader
Flint Lockwood
Anna Faris
Sam Sparks
James Caan
Tim Lockwood
Will Forte
Chester V
Andy Samberg
Brent McHale
Benjamin Bratt
Manny

Neil Patrick Harris
Steve
Terry Crews
Earl Devereaux
Kristen Schaal
Barb

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS In Colour
[2.35:1]
Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing

8,520 ft +0 frames

US, present day. Flint Lockwood, inventor of the FLDSMDFR water-into-food machine, is recruited by his idol Chester V, head of Live Corp. He is sent back to Swallow Falls island, now overrun by FLDSMDFR-made giant 'food animals', to stop the machine with a posse of friends. His girlfriend Sam realises that the scary 'foodimals' are friendly and are sustained by the machine's ecosystem. When Flint tracks down the machine, Chester V steals it and kidnaps all the foodimals to grind them into Live Corp food bars. Flint and his friends release the foodimals. Chester V falls into his giant grinder during the struggle. FLDSMDFR is reconnected, and everyone lives happily in the restored ecosystem.

Computer Chess

USA 2013

Director: Andrew Bujalski

See Feature
on page 34

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"Just here to see the end of the world," says John (Jim Lewis), cheerily explaining why he is attending a computer chess tournament in a nondescript

American hotel even though he and his drug-dealing buddy Freddy (Freddy Martinez) have nothing to do with computers. A reference to the approach of 1984 lends an Orwellian sense of both impending doom and a future unrealised. This was also the year that saw the release of Jeff Kanew's *Revenge of the Nerds* and James Cameron's *The Terminator*, films which, in an oblique way, *Computer Chess* draws on in its mannered pitting of nerdish man (and one woman) against machine during a competition that is contributing, unassumingly, to the birth of the networked world to come.

Andrew Bujalski, writer/director of *Funny Ha Ha* (2002), *Mutual Appreciation* (2005) and *Beeswax* (2009), here modifies mumblecore to mumblecode, taking us back to a time when computers (as we know them) were in an embryonic state, geeks were still off the mainstream grid and apocalyptic changes in the industry were just around the corner. Chess expert Pat Henderson (Gerald Peary, film critic for the *Boston Phoenix*), who presides as grandmaster of ceremonies and will challenge whichever program wins to a final tournament, opens the event with a story about 'the Turk', the first ever chess-playing machine: it defeated, among others, Benjamin Franklin (in 1783) and Napoleon Bonaparte (in 1809), even though all along a man hidden inside the clockwork device was making the winning moves.

The anecdote is an apt introduction for a film in which some of the programmers (many played by genuine tech heads) seem less than human – and therefore all the more human – while some of the computers display moods (or should that be modes?) that come across as decidedly unmachinelike. For here the warts-and-all character of the designers is replicated in the computers: TSAR 3.0's propensity to keep 'committing suicide' seems merely to match its catatonically lugubrious student programmer Peter Bishton (Patrick Riester), while the mercurial gambits of CHECKERS echo the unpredictable movements of its maverick programmer Michael Papageorge (Myles Paige). Meanwhile another programmer, Luke (Bert Herigstad), identifies completely with his computer ("It's all me, LUKE Version 1. There's only Version 1"). If their obsessiveness and eccentricity at first generate a cringe-inducing, nostalgia-tinged comedy of manners, soon the laughs give way to a more mysterious surrealism, as paranoia sets in, as an infestation of cats (that staple of today's internet) takes over the hotel's interiors, as a computer appears to evolve a nascent consciousness, and as humans start exposing their own inner circuitry.

Shot (but for one glitchy sequence) in black-and-white on an outdated Sony AVC-3260 tube camera and in 4:3 aspect ratio, *Computer Chess* looks as amiably clunky as the early computers it celebrates. If the singularity – the moment when artificial intelligence exceeds and merges



Close encounters of the nerd kind: Wiley Wiggins and Bert Herigstad

with its human counterpart – is what these pioneering programmers are seeking, then in its way Bujalski's filmmaking aims for its visual analogue. In one scene, the state of confusion induced in an exhausted Bishton as he listens to the technical explanations of his teacher Tom Schoesser (Gordon Kindlmann) is expressed by jumpy, disorienting edits, while in another the circuit of insolvency and overmothering in which Papageorge has become caught is represented by a coloured loop of repeating footage (with a voiceover describing a computer error). If the cameraman (Kevin Bowersdorf) documenting the competition finally, despite warnings, points his Sony Portapak towards the sun, burning out the image that he records (and that we see), this mirrors the Icarus-

like hubris of these computer geeks, soaring imperfectly (and overstretching their equipment) to forge the tomorrow that is our today.

As these academic researchers, corporate drones and oddball independents are forced to share the hotel with a touchy-feely couples' therapy group, they too find themselves struggling to break free of limited mindsets and be reborn. Meanwhile the hotel itself takes on the labyrinthine aspect of Resnais's *Marienbad* – a place where games are played, traps are set and escape seems all but impossible. The code for the future has already been written – and as Bujalski seeks to discover who we are and where we come from (not just as wired-in 21st-century users but as human beings), it's checkmate in 12 hilariously unorthodox moves. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Houston King
Alex Lipschultz

Writer

Andrew Bujalski

Director of Photography

Matthias Grunsky

Editor

Andrew Bujalski

Production Designer

Michael Bricker

Sound Recordists

Kevin Bowersdorf

Costume Designer

Colin Wilkes

Companies

@Computer
Chess LLC

Production Companies

Supported by TFI

Sloan Filmmaker Fund

Additional support

provided by the Austin

Film Society through

the Texas Filmmakers'

Production Fund

Funded in part by

USA Projects

Matching grants

provided by

Artists2Artists Fund,

Austin Film Fund

Cast

Kriss Schludermann

Advantage member

Tom Fletcher

Deep Speed member

Wiley Wiggins

Martin Beuscher

Patrick Riester

Peter Bishton

Kevin Bowersdorf

cameraman

Gene Williams

Monsieur d'Echecs

member

Jim Lewis

John

Freddy Martinez

Freddy

Cole Noppenberg

Capa X member

Myles Paige

Michael Papageorge

Gerald Peary

Pat Henderson

James Curry

Carbray

Bob Sabiston

McVey

In Black and White

and Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Eureka Entertainment

The US, early 1980s. Programmers assemble at a hotel for a weekend chess tournament that will pit their computers against one another, with the winner taking on MC and grandmaster Pat Henderson. Experimental psychologist Martin Beuscher and student Peter Bishton run the TSAR 3.0 program in the absence of their professor, the well-connected Tom Schoesser, and keep having to concede games as the program plays suicidal moves. Arriving the following day, Schoesser reassures the despondent Bishton that defeat is an advantage and that TSAR 3.0 will win the long game. That night, Bishton meets with Shelly Flintic, member of the MIT team running the STASIA program (and the only woman in attendance), and discovers that TSAR 3.0 performs better against a human opponent. Later, Schoesser

dismisses Bishton's theory. Meanwhile, with no room booked, maverick independent Michael Papageorge sleeps on other peoples' floors and on the staircase. Eventually given his own room, he finds it infested with cats, and sleeps instead under a table in the conference room, where he is awoken by a couples' therapy group and subjected to a rebirthing. Papageorge loses the final. A couple from the therapy group attempt to seduce Bishton, who flees. With no prize money to repay dealers John and Freddy for drugs that he stole, Papageorge goes to his mother's house with Freddy. Beuscher tells Bishton about a session when TSAR 3.0 exhibited signs of embryonic consciousness. After accidentally ruining TSAR 3.0 with rainwater, Bishton invites a prostitute to his room. She strips, revealing circuitry beneath her hair.

Day of the Flowers

United Kingdom 2013
Director: John Roberts

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

The connection between old-school Scottish lefties and the revolutionary spirit of Castro's Cuba provides an intriguing context for this romantic comedy, but the movie stumbles in trying to be serious and fluffy at the same time. When Eva Birthistle's Glaswegian ideologue Rosa flies to Havana to scatter her dad's ashes, her ditsy fashionista sister Allie (Charity Wakefield) tags along for comic effect, the latter's hopes for sun-splashed holiday romance intended to play off her sensible sibling's right-on outlook.

In making Rosa quite so exasperatingly holier-than-thou, however, the film takes a serious misstep, since Birthistle proves an unappealing and frankly unlikely match for her intended love interest, Carlos Acosta's teacher Tomas. This pretty much stops the movie in its tracks, giving us ample time to spot failings elsewhere – notably the clichéd portrayal of Cuban manhood (polarised between smouldering Latin lover and sleazy, smooth-talking trickster) and decidedly ordinary-looking location footage. Ballet star Acosta, the prime selling-point in his debut dramatic turn, is decent enough in a stodgy part, but given scant terpsichorean opportunities even though he's playing a former dancer. **B**

Acosta, Birthistle

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jonathan Rae
Written by
Eirene Houston
Director of Photography
Vernon Layton
Edited by
David Freeman
John Wilson
Production Designer
Andrew Sanders
Original Music
Stephen Warbeck
Production Sound Mixer
Martin Beresford
Costume Designer
Leonie Hartard

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Production

Companies
Rogue Elephant
Pictures presents a
Roberts – Rae
production
A Rogue Elephant
Pictures production
Executive Producers
Jonathan Rae
John Roberts

Cast
Eva Birthistle
Rosa
Charity Wakefield
Allie
Carlos Acosta
Tomas
Bryan Dick
Conway
Chris Simpson

Ernesto
Manuel de Blas
Ignacio Palma
Luis Alberto García
Ernesto's cousin
Enrique Narciso
Molina
Jorge
Aurora Basneuvo
Matilde
Phyllis Logan
Brenda

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Metrodrome
Distribution

Glasgow, present day. Rosa, a single young woman of socialist convictions, is summoned by her sister Allie to their father's funeral. They steal his ashes from his second wife and decide to deliver them to Cuba, where he met the siblings' Scottish mother on a Party-organised visit in the 1970s. On arrival in Cuba, the sisters tangle with smooth-talking conman Ernesto and helpful teacher Tomas, and the ashes are temporarily confiscated by the authorities. Rosa initially spurns Tomas before spending the night with him. She tracks down her parents' old friend Ignacio, a former revolutionary and, Rosa discovers, Allie's real father. Rosa chooses not to tell her sister, but father and daughter recognise one another. Rosa's affair with Tomas loosens her uptight attitude to romance.

Dirty Wars

USA/United Kingdom 2013
Director: Richard Rowley
Certificate 15 86m 9s

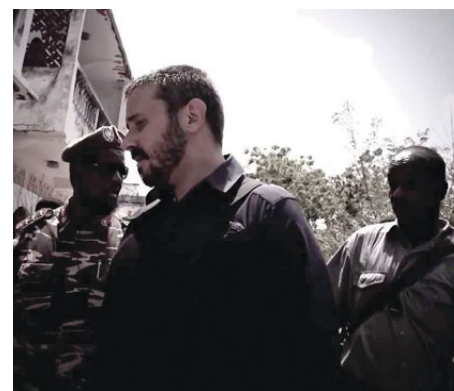
Reviewed by Guy Westwell

This forceful political documentary begins with journalist Jeremy Scahill interviewing villagers in a remote Afghan village. He is shown mobile-phone footage of the aftermath of a raid by US Special Forces that has left numerous people dead, including two pregnant women. The villagers report that to cover their tracks the soldiers used knives to dig their bullets out of the dead bodies. The scene neatly belies the myth of 'surgical' targeted killing so central to accounts of contemporary US foreign policy; indeed, the debunking of this myth might be said to be the central aim of the film as a whole.

From here, filmmaker Richard Rowley (*This Is What Democracy Looks Like*, *Deserter*) follows Scahill as he seeks to reveal the workings of the military unit responsible, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC). Through interviews, detailed research and trips to Washington DC, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia, Scahill pieces together how JSOC became a significant force during the Iraq War, he deck of cards issued to soldiers showing high-priority targets acting as its rudimentary kill list. Under the Obama presidency, JSOC's licence to kill – in military parlance, to conduct kinetic operations' to 'find, fix, and finish' people deemed a threat to national security – has been expanded and, as the film movingly recounts, his continues to have devastating consequences or those innocent people who happen to get in the way. Images of the bullet-ridden bodies of Afghan partygoers, who had moments before been celebrating the birth of a child, or of Yemeni tribespeople blasted beyond recognition by a drone strike, are an antidote to the slickness of *Zero Dark Thirty*, the film that gave JSOC's most high-profile operation – the killing of Osama bin Laden – such cinematic gloss.

For a documentary, *Dirty Wars* is heavily stylised (David Riker, whose 1998 neorealist-influenced film *The City* mixed fact and fiction, is given a writing credit alongside Scahill). Mugshots, declassified documents and atrocity photographs are pinned to the wall of a New York office, giving the feel of a police procedural, while teletype captions, long lenses and freeze frames denote danger and paranoia (at one point Scahill receives a thinly veiled threat demanding that he stop his investigation). These moves recall the 1970s conspiracy film, and it's no surprise that a number of reviewers have noted a passing resemblance to the Bourne franchise.

Scahill is shown to suffer existential despair at the actions of his country, especially the assassination of one of its own citizens, radical Muslim cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. It's the demeanour of the protagonist of many a conspiracy film (Jake Gyllenhaal's weary CIA agent in *Rendition* springs to mind) but one wonders if the national security correspondent for *The Nation* and author of 2007's international bestseller *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* can really be quite so unsettled at what his investigation has revealed. Indeed, this 'innocence lost' trope – in which the US is deemed to have lost its moral bearings post-Abu Ghraib – makes it difficult for the film to acknowledge that when it comes to dirty



Unclean slate: Jeremy Scahill

wars the US has form: Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, Central and Latin America in the 1980s. For many – including presumably the filmmakers and the potential audience – these earlier covert wars, as well as the existence of JSOC, extrajudicial assassinations and drone strikes with significant collateral damage, will hardly come as jaw-dropping revelations. Might the filmmakers have presumed some historical awareness here and instead sought visual means to picture the long history of extrajudicial killing by US agencies? The question is worth posing precisely because this long history is so ably detailed in Scahill's own tie-in book.

So, the film might have reached further. But that shouldn't distract from the fact that it deserves to be seen, especially by those who might have succumbed to the spin that the war on terror has reached some kind of stable, bloodless détente. **B**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Anthony Arnove
Brenda Coughlin
Jeremy Scahill
Written by
Jeremy Scahill
David Riker
Edited by
Richard Rowley
Edited by
Richard Rowley
David Riker
Music
David Harrington
Supervising Sound Editor/Sound Designer/Re-Recording Mixer
Christopher Barnett

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Big Noise Films
Production Companies

Civic Bakery
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Bertha/Britdoc, The
Bertha Foundation,
Kindle Project Fund
of the Common
Counsel Foundation,
Sundance Institute
Documentary Film
Program, Vital
Projects Fund,
Wallace Global Fund
Executive Producers
Scott Roth
Jess Search
Randall Wallace
Sandra Whigham

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Brit Doc Films

77538 ft +8 frames

narrated by
Jeremy Scahill

Afghanistan, 2010. Investigating a US night raid, journalist Jeremy Scahill is told of the death of a number of villagers and hears claims of a cover-up by an elite US military unit. Through interviews with survivors of drone strikes and targeted attacks, Special Forces soldiers, military generals and US-backed warlords, Scahill details the workings of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which has conducted extrajudicial killings in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere. Scahill reveals that JSOC missions have increased under the Obama administration and have included the assassination of US citizens Anwar al-Awlaki and his 16-year-old son.

Dom Hemingway

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Richard Shepard

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

From the title, Richard Shepard's film might be an S&M remake of Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris*. As it turns out, it's nothing quite so subtle. The first thing we're confronted with is Jude Law stark naked against a prison backdrop, bellowing: "Is ma cock exquisite?" in his best mock-Cockney. Much more verbiage in this vein ensues, in which the said impressive member is deemed worthy *inter alia* of the Nobel Prize or having a school named in its honour, after which we pull back to see that Law, playing the eponymous jailbird, is being sucked off by a fellow prisoner.

On the strength of his previous work (*The Matador*, *The Hunting Party*), writer-director Shepard has a penchant for supposedly charismatic villains and a style (both visual and verbal) that blends vulgarity, violence and the poetry of excess. *Dom Hemingway* (a mocking nod to the famously pared-down author of *A Farewell to Arms* is presumably intended) takes all these traits to extremes. Law, who's evidently enjoying himself no end, is granted several more of these extended riffs of florid gutter-baroque. When his friend Dickie Black (Richard E. Grant, whose appalled reaction shots provide some of the film's funniest moments) calls his attention to the beauties of the southern French landscape, Dom retorts that it "looks like a barmaid's snatch after a World Cup weekend".

Dom and Dickie are heading south on the TGV to confront Mr Fontaine (Demián Bichir), the Russian-French crime boss for whom Dom has just spent 12 years in jail and from whom he expects hefty compensation. For this is that old standby, the newly released convict out for revenge on and/or money from those for whom he has spent time inside, and the overall effect is rather as though *Point Blank* had been reworked by Quentin Tarantino. Like Tarantino, Shepard tends to disregard plausibility when it suits him. The idea that Fontaine, presented as a cool and canny operator, would take a nocturnal ride in



Deadly but not Ernest: Jude Law

a car driven by the drunken and perennially out-of-control Dom, scarcely holds water; but the plot needs a fatal crash, so in it goes.

Traditionally, a taste for excessive violence is often the flipside of a glutinous sentimentality (see the Kray brothers, or almost any movie Mafia boss) and that seems to go for Shepard too. Plot strands involving Dom's estranged daughter Evelyn, or Melody, the hippy-dippy American girl whose life he saves after the car crash and who hands out fortune-cookie advice ("Love is what you make it, Dom"), drip with facile sentiment. Still, these elements can be overlooked (or endured) for the sake of the raucous amusement to be had from the rest of the film. If you switch off your moral compass and don't set your critical benchmark too high, *Dom Hemingway* offers a fair measure of good noisy OTT fun. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jeremy Thomas
Written by
Richard Shepard
Director of Photography
Giles Nuttgens
Edited by
Dana Congdon
Production Designer
Laurence Dorman
Music Composed by
Rolf Kent

Production Sound Mixer
John Midgley
Costume Designer
Julian Day

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Production Companies
Jeremy Thomas presents
BBC Films and Isle of Man Film Festival

in association with
HanWay Films and
Pinewood Pictures
a Recorded Picture
Company production
A Richard
Shepard film
Executive Producers
Steve Norris
Ivan Dunleavy
Peter Watson
Zygi Kamasa
Christine Langan

Steve Christian

Cast

Jude Law
Dom Hemingway
Richard E. Grant
Dickie Black
Demián Bichir
Mr Fontaine
Emilia Clarke
Evelyn
Kerry Condon

Melody
Jumayn Hunter
Lestor McGreevy
Madalina Ghenea
Paolina
Nathan Stewart-Jarrett
Hugh

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

A London prison, present day. Safecracker Dom Hemingway is released after serving 12 years in jail. He traces the bus driver who married his now deceased ex-wife and beats him nearly to death, before meeting up with old friend Dickie Black. Dom and Dickie travel to the South of France to the villa of Mr Fontaine, the Russian-French crime boss for whom Dom served time. Drunk, Dom insults Fontaine but Dickie persuades him to apologise, and Fontaine gives Dom £750,000. Along with Fontaine's girlfriend Paolina and two American girls imported for the occasion, the three men enjoy an orgy of sex, drink and drugs, after which they take a joyride in Fontaine's sports car, with Dom driving. The car hits a tree. Fontaine is mortally injured but Dom manages to revive one

of the American girls, Melody. Back at the villa he finds that Paolina has made off with his cash.

Back in London, Dom seeks out his estranged daughter Evelyn, now living with the father of her young son, but she rejects him. Dom appeals to gang boss Lestor McGreevy, son of his former enemy, for a job. Lestor issues a challenge: open his ultra-modern safe in ten minutes, or be castrated. At Lestor's club Dom cracks the safe but Lestor has tricked him. Dom and Dickie escape. Dom meets Melody again; she tells him to do something for love, not money, and his luck will change. At his wife's grave Dom is joined by his young grandson, and Evelyn hints that she may forgive him. Seeing Paolina entering a restaurant, Dom confronts her and tells her that he intends to have his money back.

Don Jon

Director: Joseph Gordon-Levitt
Certificate 18 90m 10s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

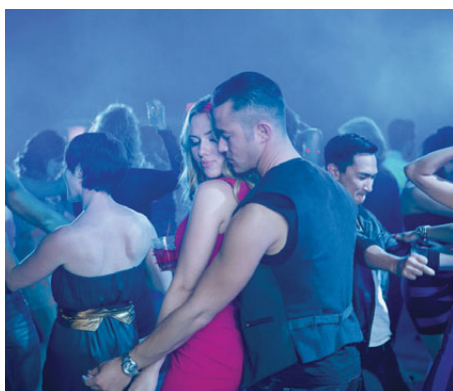
Choiinnnggg! The unmistakable sound of a laptop starting up becomes a running gag in this romcom dissection of the whys and wherefores of a straight male's online fantasy life, since it comes to mean only one thing – single New Jersey bartender 'Don' Jon is about to masturbate over porn. Again. Taking a leaf from the *Alfie* playbook, writer-director-star Joseph Gordon-Levitt has his protagonist launching into self-justifying voiceover, generating laughter and a certain amount of reluctant recognition as he declares how losing himself in the miasma of hardcore sexual imagery proves freer, and more fulfilling, than submitting to the physical demands and social niceties involved in having actual sex with a real woman.

It's an attention-grabbing opening salvo, not least because it refuses to treat the single-handed act Woody Allen waggishly dubbed "sex with someone I love" as the last resort of the lonely loser, regarding it with some humour but avoiding the gross-out infantilisation that's often the default mode of mainstream Hollywood comedy. What we see of Jon's viewing habits is kept within strict R-rated limits – anatomical detail and bodily fluids firmly off screen – so we're talking about the idea of porn rather than the rawer, perhaps more troubling reality, since ultimately this is not really a film about porn but about what men want and indeed need from women.

Scarlett Johansson is aptly cast as the curvaceous embodiment of Jon's desires, tempting him away from his computer screen and cajoling him to sign up for self-bettering night classes, shop for home furnishings and seemingly begin the acclimatisation process towards marriage/children/domesticity. His continuing porn habit soon becomes a point of conflict, since she finds it a deal-breaking repellent, and while Gordon-Levitt's film attempts to make an intriguing point about her aspirations being as determined by the social constructs of sappy romance as his objectifying view of women is warped by the underlying values of wank material, it never really develops the Johansson character in a way that would make that assertion stick.

Indeed, the first-time writer-director isn't stuck for ideas but stumbles in fleshing out the narrative. His own central character gets a choice dramatic arc, from cocksure Lothario through the chastening ill-starred affair and onwards to a fuller understanding of the relationship between sex and emotional commitment (courtesy of a brilliant Julianne Moore as Esther, the unconventional older woman he meets at an evening class). However, a propensity to Noo Joisey caricature when dealing with Jon's family and Catholicism leaves us uncertain how seriously to take the film, how seriously it takes itself.

Gordon-Levitt's direction does at least salvage some degree of credible intimacy from the protagonist's developing connection with the accommodating Esther, yet her contribution, as the facilitator helping him to realise that his porn habit is actually insulating him from the vulnerability of genuine sexual communication, feels as if the story



Handyman: Gordon-Levitt and Johansson

is rewarding him a little too easily. For a film whose initial braggadocio appears the prelude to a cautionary tale, the lack of any infernal flames for this modern-day Don Giovanni eventually plays like something of a cop-out. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Ram Bergman	production A film by Joseph Gordon-Levitt	Amanda Perez Lisa
Written by Joseph Gordon-Levitt	Executive Producer Nicolas Chartier	Lindsey Broad Lauren
Director of Photography Thomas Kloss		Tony Danza Jon Sr
Film Editor Lauren Zuckerman	Cast Joseph Gordon-Levitt Jon Martello, 'Don Jon'	Sarah Dumont Sequins
Production Designer Meghan C. Rogers	Scarlett Johansson Barbara	Sloane Avery Patricia
Music Nathan Johnson	Julianne Moore Esther	
Sound Mixer Pawel Wdowczak	Rob Brown Bobby	Distributor Warner Bros Distributors (UK)
Costume Designer Leah Katznelson	Glenn Headly Angela	8,115 ft +0 frames
Production Companies Voltage Pictures presents A HitRecord Films production A Ram Bergman	Brie Larson Monica	
	Jeremy Luke Danny	
	Italia Ricci Gina	

New Jersey, present day. Twentysomething bartender Jon enjoys masturbating over online pornography, which he finds more satisfying than sex with the women he picks up while out on the town. When the attractive Barbara gives him the brush-off, however, it makes him determined to pursue her. The two start dating, and it becomes obvious that Barbara is interested in serious commitment, her values moulded by social norms and Hollywood romance. Restraining his ardour, she only sleeps with Jon after he starts taking a computer evening class, but is horrified when she subsequently catches him watching porn on his laptop. He mollifies her by agreeing never to look at it again, and their relationship proceeds over the following months until she checks his browser history, realises he's still visiting porn sites and walks out. He can't bear to reveal the break-up to his parents or friends, though in the meantime he has befriended classmate Esther, an unconventional older woman who's emotionally volatile yet sexually accommodating. Esther makes Jon confront his porn addiction, while her revelation that she lost her husband and son brings them closer and helps him connect emotional intimacy with sexuality for the first time. When Jon finally tells his family about Barbara, his sister's response that she was controlling him strikes a chord. Jon walks away from a lunch date with Barbara. His relationship with Esther develops day by day.

Either Way

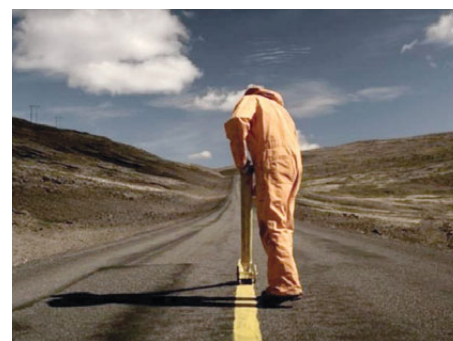
Iceland/United Kingdom 2011
Director: Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson
Certificate 15 84m 23s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

Rich cloth has been spun from the raw stuff of a couple of bored guys sharing inconsequential conversation, with *Waiting for Godot* the ever present reference point and *Stranger Than Paradise* (1984), *Withnail & I* (1986), *Uzak* (2003), *Adam & Paul* (2004) and *Old Joy* (2006) some notable big-screen manifestations. (In line with Beckett, who famously objected to female actors playing in *Godot*, pairs of bored women have less currency, though 2001's *Ghost World* provides an uncommon example.)

This Icelandic take on the mini-genre strands its odd couple in bleak rural vistas rendered richly beautiful by Arni Filippusson's impressive digital photography. Curmudgeonly thirtysomething Finnbogi is employed to paint markings on remote roads. As a favour to his long-term girlfriend Rannveig, with whom he lives in Vienna, Finnbogi has taken on her younger brother Alfred as a workmate; but Alfred proves to be unprepossessing company, chiefly concerned with either reliving his last drunken sexual encounter or anticipating the next one, and any credit that Finnbogi might have earned with Rannveig by employing him is negated when she breaks up with him by letter.

The film's set-up mimics the cosy Hollywood bromance, in which men separated from the distraction of women find out what they truly mean to one another (and indeed, it has already prompted a Hollywood remake, *Prince Avalanche*, directed by David Gordon Green and with the frequently bromantic Paul Rudd in the Finnbogi role). But the interaction between Finnbogi and Alfred has a sharp edge of real nastiness, with writer/director Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson and co-scribe Sveinn Olafur Gunnarsson repeatedly dangling the possibility of violence as one potential ending for their story. When Finnbogi disappears after getting the bad news from Rannveig, the landscape seems to offer up countless ways he might have offed himself. On his return, it's Alfred who looks to be in peril, as he gauchely ribs a hammer-wielding Finnbogi about the end of his relationship.



Lust highway: Sveinn Olafur Gunnarsson

In the event, it is a near-death experience that alters things between them, but an accidental one – Finnbogi topples into the water while fishing, and Alfred, in a rare act of decisiveness and effectiveness, pulls him to safety. It's a somewhat so-what moment, however: the fact that both men are so very unprepossessing, and have already been presented as being disposable to the narrative via the aforementioned who-might-die-first game, rather steals the emotional impact from this one real moment of action. Perhaps a degree of acerbic wit has been lost in translation from the Icelandic, but the conversation between Alfred and Finnbogi – making up as it does the vast bulk of the film's content – would have needed to involve more than this low grumble of blokey misogyny to have told us anything really worth hearing. "Did you get the little man squeezed? Not even a bit of fingering?" is a typically witty query from Finnbogi to Alfred after one of their weekends apart. A couple of appearances by a mysterious woman hitchhiker with a Mona Lisa smile and nothing to say are possibly supposed to indicate something about an eternal feminine benignly watching over them, or perhaps just something about all the sex they aren't getting – it isn't clear. But certainly when Finnbogi and Alfred do finally bond it's over their disappointment with women; and that seems a small-minded conclusion for such a beautiful-looking film to offer up. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Arni Filippusson David Óskär Ólafsson Hrein Beck Sindri Páll Kjartansson Tobias Munthe Theo Youngstein	©Mystery Island, Flickbook Films	Runólfur Ingólfsson Porbjörn Gudmundsson men in electricity post Sara Marti Gudmundsdóttir Rannveig's voice
Written by Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson	Production Companies Mystery Island & Flickbook Films present in association with the Icelandic Filmcentre a film by Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson	In Colour [2.35:1] Subtitles
Story Hafsteinn Gunnar Sigurdsson Sveinn Olafur Gunnarsson	Production companies: Flickbook Films, Mystery Island	Distributor Filmhouse
Director of Photography Arni Filippusson	Cast Hilmar Guðjónsson Alfred Sveinn Ólafur Gunnarsson Finnbogi Porsteinn Bachmann truck driver Valgerdur Rúnarsdóttir woman	7,594 ft +8 frames
Edited by Kristján Lodmífjörð		Icelandic theatrical title Á annan veg
Production Design Hálfdrán Pedersen		
Sound Recording Arni Guðafsson		
Costume Design Margrét Einarssdóttir		

Rural Iceland, the present. Finnbogi has arranged for his girlfriend Rannveig's feckless younger brother Alfred to work alongside him painting road markings. The two get drunk together on moonshine provided by a friendly trucker, but Alfred antagonises Finnbogi by speaking crudely about Rannveig and her previous lovers. Finnbogi writes lovingly to Rannveig, who lives in Vienna, but she responds by breaking up with him. The two men separate for the weekend, Alfred to seek fun and sexual gratification in his hometown, Finnbogi to talk to Rannveig. Alfred reads Rannveig's letter, and the two men fall out. Fishing, Finnbogi tumbles into the water; Alfred saves him from drowning. They reconcile and get joyously drunk together on more of the trucker's moonshine. Finnbogi tells Alfred that Rannveig has met someone else; Alfred confides to Finnbogi that he has got one of his girlfriends pregnant. Finnbogi encourages him to see this through and consider it a blessing. He asks if he can join Alfred at an outdoor festival the following weekend; Alfred agrees, promising to find Finnbogi a girl there. After a final encounter with the truck driver, who picks up an alluring female hitchhiker, the two drive off together.

Ender's Game

USA/United Kingdom 2013
Director: Gavin Hood
Certificate 12A 113m 58s

Reviewed by Sam Davies

First published in 1985, Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game*, with its multiple awards and spin-off sequels, has long been considered a candidate for film treatment. But a moment's thought about its scenario quickly explains why its adaptation has taken nearly three decades. W.C. Fields counselled against working with children but he didn't think of zero gravity – and *Ender's Game* has plenty of both. Its central character, Ender Wiggin, is a child with a genius for military strategy; sent to an orbital academy to prepare for war with an alien species called the Formics, he must survive in its competitive hothouse by excelling at a war game fought in a zero-g environment between armies of his fellow cadets.

Ender himself is the main problem for any adaptation: how to write and cast a character who must be a convincing genius without being insufferable, who beats his opponents through a gift for empathetic thinking yet has an enigmatic tendency to defeat them so profoundly that even he himself wonders whether he's a psychopath. Director Gavin Hood (*Tsotsi*, *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*) probably needed a performance with the preternatural assurance of Haley Joel Osment's in *The Sixth Sense*. Unfortunately, his Ender, Asa Butterfield (*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, *Hugo*), overplays in almost every moment of crisis or tension.

Then there is the question of the audience: with a cast made up mostly of children, what age group do you pitch the film to? There's potential for a forensic, Kubrickian take, looking at institutional violence, the cruelty of children and the cruelty of adults in charge of children: *Lord of the Flies* meets *Full Metal Jacket* in space (honestly). Not to



Ford prefect? Harrison Ford, Asa Butterfield

mention the questions of genocide and American foreign policy (overwhelming pre-emptive strikes against perceived opponents). There is a gesture towards the kind of intelligent teenage action/romance of franchises such as *The Hunger Games* in the prominence Hood gives to Ender's female comrade Petra (Hailee Steinfeld), but no more than that. Hood's vision is disappointingly functional, as though – even with a running time pushing two hours – he has become preoccupied with packing as much of the plot in as legibly as possible.

As a result *Ender's Game* is a claustrophobic watch, its ideas and emotions never allowed room to unfold. The impressively animated space battles and zero-gravity CGI must have absorbed a lot of the budget, leaving the rest of the production design disappointingly perfunctory, and this extends to the general *mise en scène*. CGI backgrounds dominate the few outdoor scenes, and the Battle School interiors always feel like a set. You never believe that Ender's world extends beyond the frame of a scene. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Gigi Pritzker
Linda McDonough
Alex Kurtzman
Roberto Orci
Robert Chartoff
Lynn Hendee
Orson Scott Card
Ed Ulbrich
Screenplay
Gavin Hood
Based on the book
by Orson Scott Card
**Director of
Photography**
Donald M. McAlpine
Edited by
Zach Staenberg
Lee Smith
**Production
Designers**

Sean Haworth
Ben Procter
Music
Steve Jablonsky
**Sound Designer/
Supervising
Sound Editor**
Dane A. Davis
Costume Designer
Christine
Bieselin Clark
**Digital Production/
Visual Effects**
Digital Domain
production
Method Studios
The Embassy
Cormen VFX

**Production
Companies**
A Summit
Entertainment
presentation
in association
with OddLot
Entertainment
A Chartoff
Productions,
Taleswapper, OddLot
Entertainment, K/O
Paper Products,
Digital Domain
production
A Gavin Hood film
Produced in
association with Dean
Street Productions,
Future Capital
Partners and Screen

Capital International
With the participation
of the Province of
British Columbia
Production Services
Tax Credit and the
Government of
Canada Production
Services Tax Credit
Executive Producers
Bill Lischak
David Coatsworth
Ivy Zhong
Venkatesh Roddam
Ted Ravinett
Deborah Del Prete
Mandy Safavi

Cast
Harrison Ford
Colonel Hyrum Graff

Asa Butterfield
Ender Wiggin
Hailee Steinfeld
Petra Arkanian
Viola Davis
Major Gwen Anderson
Abigail Breslin
Valentine Wiggin
Ben Kingsley
Mazer Rackham
Moises Arias
Bonzo Madrid
Aramis Knight
Bean
Suraj Parthasarathy
Alai
Khylin Rhambo
Dink Meeker
Jimmy Jax Pinchak
Peter Wiggin
Conor Carroll

Bernard
Nonso Anozie
Sergeant Dap
Tony Mirrcandani
Admiral
Chjamrajnager

**Dolby Digital/
Datasat
In Colour
Prints by
DeLuxe
[2.35:1]**

Distributor
El Films

10,257 ft +0 frames

Earth, the future. Humanity has successfully repelled an invasion by an insect-like alien race, the Formics. In preparation for another attack, the world's children are monitored for strategic ability in the hope of finding and training a commander of genius. Ender Wiggin is selected for Battle School, a space station where cadets are organised into 'armies' to fight war games in zero gravity. Ender excels and is soon given command of his own army. In downtime he plays a role-playing computer game which disturbs him through its understanding of his psyche. After he humiliates older commander Bonzo in a zero-gravity battle, Ender is cornered and attacked. He fights back but nearly kills Bonzo. Horrified, he quits Battle School. The school's commander, Colonel Graff, convinces Ender's sister Valentine to talk him into

returning. Ender is promoted to Command School on a distant planet abandoned by the Formics, where he fights a series of simulated space battles. In a final simulation in which he is hugely outnumbered by a fleet defending the Formics' home planet, Ender sacrifices his own forces and uses a secret weapon to destroy the entire planet rather than its defenders. Graff reveals that the simulations have been real; commanding a fleet remotely, he has won a total victory but only by committing genocide. Ender is distraught but soon realises that the computer game that so disturbed him was being manipulated by the Formics' hive-mind in an attempt to communicate with him. He finds himself guided to where an egg for a Formic queen is hidden, and departs with it into space to find a planet where the Formics can be reborn.

Escape Plan

USA 2013
Director: Mikael Håfström
Certificate 15 115m 29s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Jailbreaks, like heists, have endured as screen spectacles not just for their inherent transgressive thrills but also because they've proven surprisingly malleable within genre: from austere procedural (*A Man Escaped*) and proto-noir (*You Only Live Once*) to comedy both deadpan and outrageous (*Down by Law*, *Stir Crazy*) and cathartic fantasy (*The Shawshank Redemption*). *Escape Plan* – which teams Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger for a whole movie rather than the ships-in-the-night liaisons of the *Expendables* franchise – begins as an ultra-high-concept caper before settling into the bone-crunching action grooves the two stars are so familiar with. It's a solidly entertaining if often preposterous affair, one that channels the slick thrillers of the 1980s without overdosing on ironic self-regard.

Director Mikael Håfström made the 2007 Stephen King adaptation *1408*, about a self-styled paranormal debunker who voluntarily places himself inside supposedly haunted buildings. Here, Stallone plays Ray Breslin, a structural expert and penitentiary Houdini who helps prisons identify crucial security flaws by having himself incarcerated and then orchestrating ingenious escapes. Like those of engineering whizz Michael Scofield in TV's *Prison Break*, Breslin's audacious plans leave an awful lot to happenstance, as shown in a neat opening sequence. Aided by a *Mission Impossible*-style crack team of outside accomplices (including the terribly underused Amy Ryan and Vincent D'Onofrio), the escapist scours every inch of wall and every quirk of behaviour in a facility to make a quick exit. But he faces an altogether more dangerous task when CIA spooks ask him to test-drive a hellhole that's officially off the grid, built to 'disappear' the world's most heinous offenders. Soon after shaking on it, Ray realises that he's been shafted, and that somebody – not least sadistic warden Hobbes (a ripe, moustache-twirling turn from Jim Caviezel) – is keen for him to remain behind bars for good.

Playing off Stallone's straight man, Schwarzenegger has visible fun with his role as Ray's mysterious ally Emil Rottmayer. He also figures centrally in some of the movie's most indelible scenes, whether resisting an extreme form of waterboarding or faking a hysterical freakout in solitary confinement. It's unlikely, however, that "Have a lovely day!" – uttered after a machine-gun rampage – will enter the lexicon of distinguished Arnie one-liners. Indeed, the script is slapdash, showing signs of hasty rewrites. When Emil wonders why a guy like Ray would choose to spend most of his life in prison, there's a vague intimation that family tragedy motivates his unique career. But the film fudges this; coherence is ultimately sacrificed for forward momentum. The prison-flick tropes – warring ethnic gangs, a morally conflicted doctor (Sam Neill, sleepwalking), chaotic riots – seem rather tired. But they're compensated for by Barry Chusid's fiendish design, which imagines the facility as a series of suspended transparent glass cages, the surrounding space a collision of hi-tech and industrial grime. And as in *1408*, Håfström cannily exploits disorientating, confined spaces –

The Family

France/USA 2013
Director: Luc Besson
Certificate 15 111m 24s

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

It's a happy-go-lucky film that sets Robert De Niro, in the role of a mafioso, on the front row of a village-hall screening of *Goodfellas* and then invites him up on stage to vouch for its authenticity while his FBI handler, played by Tommy Lee Jones, despairs of his ever keeping the low profile that's the whole point of the witness protection programme.

Viewers who find this scene amusing may also take exception to the lenient frivolity that makes it feasible in the first place, because it issues from director Luc Besson – this isn't the return to form his fans are eagerly awaiting. But given that Besson hasn't made a film like *Léon* (1994) or *Angel-A* (2005) in many years – films that create strange magic from the marriage of the profound 'child' and ingenuous sensuality – it's perhaps an unfairly high expectation to carry over into viewings of his more recent works.

The Family is a French-US co-production and feels like it. It's the kind of film the French turn out in double figures every year: the high jinks comedy blockbuster about family for the family that will never meet with UK distribution. (François Ozon's arthouse angle on Gallic family slapstick pays *his* passage over the Channel.) The American equivalent is less common but has a tendency, when really good, to become a popular classic. *National Lampoon's Vacation* (1983) and *Meet the Parents* (2000) had sticking power enough to spawn multiple high-grossing sequels between them, and indie varieties like *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) and *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) have occasioned many poorer imitations. But the closest cousin of Besson's latest is *The Addams Family* franchise, also about a family of murderous misfits living nose-to-tail with ordinary people.

The Manzoni family are out of their biological element – ever since Giovanni (De Niro), a notorious gangster, ratted on a Brooklyn boss and was forced into hiding in Europe under 24-hour surveillance. As descendants of Mafia nobility, Giovanni, wife Maggie (Michelle Pfeiffer) and teenage kids Warren and Belle might have escaped the old neighbourhood but are sweetly enslaved to violent compulsions – the shakedown and the mock execution being the only way they know. Making heaps of bloody trouble wherever they settle, it's any port in a storm – but in their new home, a Normandy parish, they've more than the inevitable body count of locals to worry about, what with the don still placing orders from his Attica prison and a contract killer on his way over from America.

It's a first-rate premise, but ensemble-led it lacks a focal point. However, the absurdist comedy is prime entertainment, if rarely raucously funny, and suits narrator De Niro, who was a Focker before he was a Manzoni. The *mise en scène* is spruce and witty, and the chemistry between De Niro and the excellent Pfeiffer is appetisingly good. The glad participation of these actors points to the better, more finely tuned film this might have been, as do parts of the script more insightfully sympathetic than others. One of these scenes sees Maggie taking lunch to the live-in G-Men, sparking a natural and sagaciously funny dialogue about the superiority of Italian cooking over French, which uses too much cream



The great escape: Schwarzenegger and Stallone

an isolation cell filled with blinding light instead of darkness is particularly effective. Still, it's disappointing that, despite what we've learnt of Ray's guile and resourcefulness, the movie shifts its emphasis to the purely physical, with much of the eventual prison break relying on brute force – Stallone shedding his MacGyver disguise to reveal that Rambo was underneath all along. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Mark Canton
Randall Emmett
Remington Chase
Robbie Brenner

Screenplay

Miles Chapman
Arnell Jesko

Story

Miles Chapman

Director of

Photography

Brendan Galvin

Edited by

Elliot Greenberg

Production

Designer

Barry Chusid

Music by/

Conducted by

Alex Heffes

Sound Mixer

Richard Schexnayder

Costume Designer

Lizz Wolf

Stunt Co-ordinator

Noon Orsatti

©Georgia Film

Fund Twelve, LLC

Production

Companies

Summit

Entertainment

presents in

association with

Emmett/Furla Films

a Mark Canton

Envision

Entertainment

Bois/Schiller

Production

A film by Mikael

Håfström

Executive

Producers

George Furla

Mark Stewart

Zack Schiller

Alexander Boies

Nicolas Stern

Jeff Rice

Brandt Andersen

Cast

Sylvester Stallone

Ray Breslin

Arnold

Schwarzenegger

Emil Rottmayer

Jim Caviezel

Willard Hobbes

Curtis '50 Cent'

Jackson

Hush

Sam Neill

Dr Kyrie

Vinnie Jones

Drake

Faran Tahir

Javed

Vincent D'Onofrio

Lester Clark

Amy Ryan

Abigail Ross

Dolby Digital/

Datasat/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

E1 Films

10,393ft +8 frames

Present-day US. Ray Breslin is a structural expert who identifies design flaws in maximum-security prisons by having himself incarcerated and then orchestrating ingenious escapes. He is approached by CIA operative Jessica Miller, who persuades him to tackle a secret prison designed to hold the world's worst criminals. En route to the location, Ray is drugged, loses contact with his back-up team and witnesses a prisoner being murdered. Realising that he's been set up, Ray forges an alliance with fellow inmate Emil Rottmayer, who is being pressured by callous warden Hobbs for information on his former associate, master thief Victor Mannheim. Ray's duplicitous business partner Lester, himself eager to seize Mannheim's riches, instructs Hobbs to keep Ray subdued. Identifying a weak spot in the cells, Ray breaks out and discovers that the prison is in the bowels of a ship. Using a makeshift compass, Ray deduces that the ship lies off the coast of Morocco. Emil arranges for coordinates to be sent to accomplices outside. Ray and Emil instigate a riot, during which they escape to the deck. Emil's men storm the ship; Hobbs is killed in a shootout. Emil reveals that he is in fact Mannheim, and that Jessica is his daughter – the plan was always to break him out.



In the line of fire: Michelle Pfeiffer

and makes your aorta "stiffer than a hockey stick".

Much like the Manzoni, *The Family* is what it is – and no mistake on Besson's part. If it should get its television premiere in time for the lead-up to Christmas, it will make enjoyable viewing for the family with grown children, sitting together over the dinner table where many of its scenes play out. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Virginie Besson-Silla
Ryan Kavanaugh

Screenplay

Luc Besson
Michael Caleo

Based on the book

Malavita by Tonino

Benacquista

Director of

Photography

Thierry Arbogast

Editing

Julien Rey

Production

Designer

Hugues Tissandier

Original Score

Composed by

Evgueni Galperine

Sacha Galperine

Sound

Didier Lozahic

Ken Yasumoto

Costume Designer

Olivier Beriot

©Europacorp, TF1

Films Production,

Grive Productions

Production

Companies

Europacorp presents

Relativity Media

presents a

co-production

of Europacorp,

Relativity Media, TF1

Films Production and

Grive Productions

With the

participation of

Canal+ and TF1

Executive Producer

Fat Freddy

Rocco

Film Extracts

Some Came

Running (1958)

Fantomas (1913)

GoodFellas (1990)

Cast

Robert De Niro

Giovanni Manzoni,

'Fred Blake'

Michelle Pfeiffer

Maggie Blake

Tommy Lee Jones

Robert Stansfield

Dianna Agron

Belle Blake

John D'Leo

Warren Blake

Domenick

Lombardozzi

Caputo

Jimmy Palumbo

Di Cicco

Vincent Pastore

Fat Willy

Jon Freda

Rocco

Dolby Digital/

Datasat/SDDS

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

E1 Films

10,026ft +0 frames

French theatrical title

Malavita

France, present day. New York mafioso Giovanni Manzoni and his family are in the witness protection programme and have set up home in parochial Normandy, posing as the Blake family. Teenagers Warren and Belle start school; Warren is beaten up by bullies. Giovanni, finding a typewriter, starts writing his memoirs. His wife Maggie blows up a supermarket when the shop assistant insults her. Warren, an expert manipulator, exacts revenge on the school bullies. Giovanni straps explosives to the chemical plant that's turning his tap water brown. The family host a barbecue to integrate with the locals, and Giovanni accepts an invitation to speak at a film-club meeting. Meanwhile the crime boss incriminated by Giovanni's evidence has sent a team of hitmen to Normandy. The family pull together to pick their attackers off one by one but leave a trail of destruction that forces them on to another new home.

Future My Love

United Kingdom/Sweden 2012
Director: Maja Borg

Reviewed by Carmen Gray

Swedish director Maja Borg's documentary feature debut is both a farewell letter to an ended relationship and an open invitation to humanity to let go of our failed global economic system. Experimental in form – fittingly, for its call to brave innovation – it builds on her 2007 short *Ottica Zero*, in which she accompanied her then lover, Italian actress Nadya Cazan, to Florida on her quest to discover an existence more purposeful than the movie system she had walked away from. The destination was the Venus Project, founded by futurist, industrial designer and social engineer Jacque Fresco, whose vision is to replace money with a resource-based economy.

Borg is very much in the frame. Black-jeaned, youthful and directly questioning but now harbouring raw emotional wounds, she hitches a ride back to Fresco's home – a curved white structure set amid lush greenery that resembles a sci-fi set – determined to heal. Borg encourages us to believe in our power to alleviate the world's sadness – a power as strong as the human capacity to damage it, and an agency she says she only realised after meeting Cazan.

"If you can bestow me this pain, imagine what pleasures you can cause me," she says in voiceover as a nuclear explosion blooms on screen. But Borg doesn't rely on apocalyptic sensationalism to make us feel, instead igniting immediacy by refusing to recognise a division between the personal and the universal. Cazan in black hijab and Borg in wedding gown and veil walk hand in hand down a tunnel of receding monochrome squares, in dissonant symmetry. Such otherworldly black-and-white Super 8 sequences punctuate the HD colour and evoke the romance of imagined futures, even as a tango soundtrack laments.

Images and phrases repeat, echoing a cyclical society of boom, bust and war. Archival footage shows the Great Depression, which Fresco



Dance with a stranger: *Future My Love*

lived through. Now the thriving business in his area is home foreclosure. In conversation and in streams of reflection, the futurist, now 97, sets out his vision in easy-to-grasp, evocative metaphors. If we used machines intelligently, he says, rather than adhering to senseless laws of scarcity, it would take less than ten years to build a sustainable, fantastic future, a second Garden of Eden. He shows drawings of architecture with the memory to heal its own cracks. Technological solutions are already a reality – Borg pays a visit to London's Royal College of Art to learn about revolutionary 3D printing.

The film is a portrait of how ideas live – gaining significance and disseminating through the human need to share vision. The problem, of course, is not recognising the need for change but effecting that change together – and the film is a tacit gift not just to Cazan but also to Fresco's ideological isolation. His base, where he lives with partner Roxanne Meadows, seems more retreat than bustling hub, and he speaks of the loneliness of thinking differently. He recalls meeting Einstein, who just wanted to talk Boolean geometry, with no interest in social application, while in high places there are too many humans who are "insufficient mentally" to solve problems.

As unarguable as Fresco's points seem, listening to him one can't help but think of Ayn Rand's much maligned treatise novel *Atlas Shrugged* and its vision of a reorganised world built by great industrial minds no longer willing to prop up parasites. But her elitist spite and egoism – which made her one of capitalism's staunchest advocates – are absent. With Borg, there's also an earnest, endearing fragility; she is quick to turn her analysis on herself and her relationship's past failings, and there's no smug, over-worthy indignation in her honest recognition that the hardest thing to change is ourselves. **S**

Gravity

USA/United Kingdom 2013
Director: Alfonso Cuarón
Certificate 12A 90m 53s

See Feature
on page 24

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

The 3D film is traditionally caricatured as a form in which things are thrown at the viewer; in *Gravity*, you might say, the viewer is thrown at things. This is a story about people floating through space, and Alfonso Cuarón's feature brilliantly contrives to make the viewer feel similarly untethered, to often thrilling effect. This is surely the closest cinema comes to three-dimensional virtual abseiling.

Gravity is arguably the most sophisticated example yet of cinema as theme ride. The already celebrated 13-minute opening shot shows how dazzlingly and immersively this works, as the camera weaves elegant, intricate trajectories in space – or perhaps one should say 'the viewpoint' rather than 'the camera', since in such CGI spectacle the camera is for the most part virtual. The viewpoint, then, moves through space, approaching and navigating around a space station, slowly circling it, bringing us closer to and further away from its characters. Like the spacewalking Kowalski (George Clooney) and his doomed colleague Shariff (Paul Sharma), euphoric at their weightless condition, the camera is effectively dancing, with the viewer as partner.

The combination of 3D and space as a setting means that Cuarón and DP Emmanuel Lubezki – who together conceived similarly vertiginous long takes in *Children of Men* (2006) – can play havoc with the usual certainties of terrestrial *mise en scène*. One minute we're looking down on a distant Earth; the next, the planet's blueness fills the top of the screen like a sky hanging over us. At the start, at least, *Gravity* rekindles the awe and absolute strangeness that a generation experienced when first looking at photographs of our planet from a distance.

There is nowhere, in *Gravity*'s evocation of freefall, that Tim Webber's remarkable special effects won't allow the 'camera' to go. At one point it seems to pass magically right through the helmet of astronaut Ryan Stone (Sandra Bullock), passing from inside to out; and the long takes disconcertingly combine extreme distance with no less extreme close-ups. The film plays dynamically with types of movement: it sometimes has us watch from a distance as its astronauts' bodies move through the void, while at other moments the human body appears to be still while space rotates dizzily around it.

In many ways, this admirably concise film can claim to be the most significant achievement in 3D cinema (not that there's much serious competition) since *Avatar* (2009). Dramatically, however, *Gravity* is a disappointment. At moments, the film promises to deliver real substance (the title alludes not just to G-force but to the seriousness of the situation). We are alerted at the start to the quasi-mystical effect of space's overwhelming silence: something over-emphatically conveyed by suddenly cutting out from Steven Price's screeching orchestral crescendo. But as for what's eventually delivered in terms of the sublimity of the infinite and the horror of absolute solitude, such quasi-mystical intimations are better evoked by *2001* (1968) and

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Sonja Henrici
Lisbet Gabriëlsson
Maja Borg
Written by
Maja Borg
Cinematography
Minttu Mäntynen
Maja Borg
Editing
Colin Monie
Patricia Gomes
Composer
Per Störby
Sound
Siri Rødnes
Jen Longhurst
David Gülich
Mario Adamson

Marcelo de Oliveira
©SDI Productions
Ltd/Lisbet
Gabriëlsson Film
AB/Maja Borg
Filmproduktion/SVT
**Production
Companies**
Creative Scotland
and Swedish
Film Institute
SDI Productions,
Lisbet Gabriëlsson
Film AB and Maja
Borg Filmproduktion
present in co-
production with
Sveriges Television

a film by Maja Borg
Supported
by Creative
Scotland, Svenska
Filminstitutet,
Sveriges Television
Executive Producer
Noé Mendelle

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Independent
Cinema Office

A documentary blending archive material, interviews, philosophical reflections and poetic sequences. Filmmaker Maja Borg returns to the Venus Project in Florida five years after her first visit there with her then lover Nadya Cazan: she is on a quest to heal her break-up pain and find an alternative social model to the global economy. Run by futurist Jacque Fresco, the Venus Project advocates the establishment of a resource-based economy supported by technology. The film ends as the property is forced on to the market.



Three-dimensional space: Sandra Bullock

John Carpenter's *Dark Star* (1974), while *Gravity* seeks to tame them with SFX entertainment.

The desolate existential resonances of Stone's predicament are undermined by mundane character sketching in the form of a backstory – the loss of a young daughter. It's partly the sound of a baby on Earth, heard on the radio, that encourages her to continue her struggle; but the theme hits a bathetic nadir when Stone sends the dead Kowalski a message to her child: "Tell her I'm not quitting."

You can imagine how utterly imposing *Gravity* might have been if it had stuck to its guns as a drama of human isolation: though it's unrealistic to expect a multi-million-dollar CGI drama to take such a sober tack. As it is, *Gravity* is too often concerned with reassuring the audience, especially in the avuncular presence of Clooney as the ostensibly frivolous but unimpeachably noble Kowalski – not least when he seems to return from the dead to encourage Stone (Sandra Bullock), before proving to be a hallucinatory effect of trauma and oxygen withdrawal.

Too much is conveniently set up as a succession of nail-biter crises. It's suspiciously convenient that there's a chain of space stations in reach of each other, their airlocks easily opened from outside, and it's outrageous how neatly the obstacles fall into place: at a crucial moment an escape pod proves to be out of fuel ("You gotta be kidding me," groans Stone, redundantly). Finally, as she splashes down on Earth and tries to swim to safety, it looks as if the spacesuit that has protected her all this time will cause her to drown – one irony we don't need by this point.

But the film's contrivance, and the clunkiness of Alfonso and Jonás Cuarón's dialogue, shouldn't obscure the brilliance of its imagery: the objects floating in the wrecked NASA shuttle, including a dental plate and the Looney Tunes alien; a glimmering green Aurora Borealis; even, kitsch as it is, the single teardrop that floats free to be sharply focused against a

soft background. And the film's eco theme is sharply observed: sooner or later, everything floating in space becomes merely junk.

Gravity should be hailed for its vividness and for the artful elasticity with which it manipulates our sense of orientation – our bodily experience of watching, of being quasi-literally 'moved' by 3D imagery. But Cuarón ultimately sacrifices the promised ineffability for the easy payoff of cliffhanger thrills. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Alfonso Cuarón
David Heyman
Written by
Alfonso Cuarón
Jonás Cuarón
Director of Photography
Emmanuel Lubezki
Editors
Alfonso Cuarón
Mark Sanger
Production Designer
Andy Nicholson
Music
Steven Price
Supervising Sound Editor/Sound Designer
Glenn Fremantle
Costume Designer
Jany Terime

Visual Effects
Framestore
Rising Sun Pictures
NHANCE Cyber

©Warner Bros.
Entertainment, Inc.
Production Companies
Warner Bros.
Pictures presents
an Esperanto
Filmoj production
A Heyday Films
production
An Alfonso
Cuarón film
Executive Producers
Nikki Penny
Chris deFaria
Stephen Jones

Cast
Sandra Bullock
Dr Ryan Stone
George Clooney
Matt Kowalski
Ed Harris
mission control voice

Dolby Digital/Dolby Atmos/Datasat In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings presented in 3D

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors (UK)

8.179ft +8 frames

Scientist Dr Ryan Stone is on her first space mission, working on a NASA shuttle with veteran astronaut Matt Kowalski. When floating debris hits the shuttle, the other crew members are killed. Stone and Kowalski are left floating unanchored in space, low on oxygen and losing radio contact with Earth. Kowalski navigates himself and Stone to a nearby space station but the two are separated; Kowalski lets himself drift into space to maximise Stone's chances of survival. Stone is later rejoined by Kowalski, but he proves to be a hallucination. Stone uses a Russian pod to make it to a nearby Chinese station, which re-enters Earth's orbit. She finally touches down safely on Earth.

The Haunting in Connecticut 2

USA 2012, Director: Tom Elkins
Certificate 15 100m 53s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

The high cost of American medical insurance was the subtextual villain of 2009's *The Haunting in Connecticut*, which concerned a family forced to move into suspiciously cheap housing, leaving them exposed to angry spirits, possession and so on. Overmedication is a minor villain in this otherwise title-only sequel: mother Lisa Wyrick (Abigail Spencer) is accused by her sister Joyce (Katee Sackhoff) of trying to "numb yourself with pills" rather than accepting the fact that she and her daughter Heidi (Emily Alyn Lind) can see ghosts.

After moving into a country house in Pine Mountain, Georgia, the family is visited by Pastor Wells (Lance E. Nichols), who bears good news: they're living in the house of a 'stationmaster' who provided a safe stop for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. The nice white family are happy to learn from the smiling black man that they've effectively purchased a form of reprieve for collective guilt over continuing race inequalities in the US, but ghosts keep coming at them in sinister sepia and hammy intercut screams, each time so ineptly executed that it's not worth even a snicker.

But all is not as it seems, and the family eventually find a way to help the ghosts of runaway slaves, thus winning the right to no more racial hauntings – a wishful shortcut that won't work in the real world. In the final insult, Cicely Tyson takes the one-scene-only role of wise black mentor to a spiritually gifted young white child ("You don't need eyes to see, little one"). **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Paul Brooks
Scott Niemeyer
Written by
David Coggeshall
Director of Photography
Yaron Levy
Edited by
Tom Elkins
Art Director
Jeremy Woolsey
Music
Composed by
Michael
Wandmacher
Sound Mixer
Jeffrey Bloomer
Costume Designer
Dana Marie Embree

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Films LLC
Production Companies
Lionsgate and
Gold Circle Films
present a Gold Circle
Films production

Executive Producers
Joe MacCarthy
Leon Clarence
Norm Waitt

Cast
Abigail Spencer
Lisa Wyrick
Chad Michael Murray
Andy Wyrick
Katee Sackhoff
Joyce
Emily Alyn Lind
Heidi Wyrick
Cicely Tyson
Mama Kay
Morgana Shaw
Lisa's mother
Grant James
Mr Gordy
Lauren Whittington
Pennington
Nell

Dolby Digital/Datasat/SDDS
In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK

9,079 ft +8 frames

Onscreen title
The Haunting in Connecticut 2: Ghosts of Georgia

Pine Mountain, Georgia, 1993. Lisa Wyrick, her sister Joyce, daughter Heidi and husband Andy move into a big rural house. After learning that the property was once a stop on the Underground Railroad used by escaping black slaves, the women are increasingly troubled by visions of ghosts. Lisa discovers that the Railroad's 'stationmaster' killed runaway slaves to use for taxidermy subjects; she helps to kill his soul. The slaves' ghosts leave and the family are left in peace.

How to Survive a Plague

USA/United Kingdom 2012
Director: David France

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

"Make sure your second coming is a safe one." Dressed in the white robes and crown of thorns that signal Jesus, artist and activist Ray Navarro delivers a public-health message which captures the raw, radical energy of ACT UP, the organisation founded in New York in 1987 in response to the Reagan government's continued inaction on HIV/Aids. Its tactics, debates and self-documentation will resonate both with viewers of the Occupy generation and with those who lived through its history. David France's remarkable act of witness, drawing on his own documentary archives from the early years of the epidemic as well as those of the film's subjects, is both informative and moving.

As Navarro's witty and hard-hitting performance as Jesus – along with the presence of Arthur Russell songs on the soundtrack – recalls, Greenwich Village was the epicentre of the East Coast's alternative-arts and LGBT communities, and ACT UP expressed its rage dynamically and creatively, using the non-violent tools of performance art to demand change. In the most indelible and transgressive scene in the film, ACT UP members and allies march from the display of the Aids quilt in Washington DC to the White House, throwing on to its lawn the ashes of loved ones dead from Aids-related diseases.


Video, ubiquitous by 1987 as a tool of artistic practice, provides almost all the material for the film, creating both a dynamism and a poignancy – a sense both of the living, urgent presentness of the many activists who didn't survive the plague and of the constant oscillation between activist energy and overwhelming grief. Video itself was a form of activism, as seen in excerpts from Gregg Bordowitz and Jean Carlomusto's *Living with Aids* cable TV series.

Bordowitz, an experimental filmmaker best known for his first-person documentary *Fast Trip, Long Drop* (1994), is one of the supporting cast here, as a member of what became the Treatment Action Group (TAG). Its founder, bond trader turned activist Peter Staley, is central, alongside Bob Rafsky, the activist who disrupted Bill Clinton's stump speech in 1992 and received the memorable response "I feel your pain." The formation of TAG provides



Aids memoir: *How to Survive a Plague*

the argument of the narrative – that its work with drug companies proved crucial. In a pivotal scene, where ACT UP is tearing itself apart over accusations levelled at the pre-TAG Treatment and Data Committee, playwright Larry Kramer takes the mic and repeats: "This is a *plague*," stressing the medical crisis and thus defending both T&D and the film's focus.

Passionately partial and powerfully polemic, the film is also positioned by its range of archival sources as one significant story among many to be uncovered and others ongoing: as an intertitle notes, there are still 2 million people unable to afford the drugs who are dying of Aids every year (a subject tackled in John Greyson's 2009 documentary *Fig Trees*). *How to Survive a Plague* is a community story that generously gestures towards a community of stories still in urgent need of being told. 

In Fear

France/United Kingdom/Luxembourg 2012
Director: Jeremy Lovering
Certificate 15 84m 46s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"Pink or blue? Running or walking? Naked or clothed? Gun or knife?" Parked in the dark on the side of a country lane, Tom (Iain De Caestecker) poses these disjunctive questions to his companion Lucy (Alice Englert) as a kind of (off-)road game designed to distract them both from their current predicament – although his very mention of flight, exposure and weapons also lets all their anxieties return via a back route.

The previous afternoon, driving to a hotel in the Irish backwoods where they hoped to consummate their budding relationship and – maybe – forge a future together, Tom and Lucy had come to a fork in the road. The sign said they should go left, the map said they should go right – but no matter which way they turned, they kept being led back in circles to this same fork, until a growing sense of uncertainty, disorientation and fear had led Tom to declare: "I'm stopping. There's no point going on. I don't know where we're going." His words, like a crossroads, split neatly three ways into the geographical, the psychological and the existential, for the fork in the road, with its unreliable sign, represents a loaded question. Like Tom's word games, it offers up binary oppositions less mutually exclusive than they first appear, much as the same Tom who in the early scenes boasts "I'm a lover, I'm not a fighter" will later be seen rolling in the primordial mud with a fellow human whom he expressly intends to kill, while Lucy too will be terrorised into making a false (yet ultimately true) choice between Tom's life and her own.

There is an external antagonist too in Jeremy Lovering's *In Fear* – a malevolent stranger (Allen Leech) who, for reasons never explained, plays on the couple's fears and drives them to transgress their own behavioural norms; but



Road to nowhere: Alice Englert

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Howard Gertler
David France
Written by
David France
T. Woody Richman
Tyler Walk
Director of Photography
Derek Wieseahn
Edited by
T. Woody Richman
Tyler H. Walk
Original Score
Stuart Bogie
Luke O'Malley
Sound Edit & Mix
Lora Hirschberg

©How to Survive
a Plague LLC
Production Companies
Ninety Thousands

Words presents a
France/Tomchin film
In association with
Ford Foundation/
JustFilms, Impact
Partners and
Little Punk
Made with the
generous support
of Impact Partners
and with the support
of MAC AIDS Fund,
Broadway Cares/
Equity Fights AIDS,
The Laurie M. Tisch
Illumination Fund, The
Lizzie and Jonathan
Tisch Foundation,
The Steve Tisch
Foundation, New York
State Council on the
Arts, PUMA Creative
This film was
supported by the

Sundance Institute
Documentary
Film Program
Executive Producers
Joy Tomchin
Dan Cogan

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Dartmouth Films

A documentary about the activist movement that grew up in Greenwich Village, New York, in the late 1980s in response to the HIV/Aids epidemic.

The Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) launches a programme of civil disobedience, targeting political leaders including Ed Koch and Bill Clinton, dropping a condom over the house of conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh and staging a 'die-in' at St Patrick's Cathedral. At the instigation of retired chemist Dr Iris Long, the group forms the Treatment and Data Committee to organise direct action against the FDA and pharmaceutical companies and to shape the development of new drugs. Members of the Treatment and Data Committee subsequently break away from ACT UP to found the Treatment Action Group (TAG).

ACT UP members Larry Kramer and Jim Eigo, activists Ann Northrop and Garance Franke-Ruta and TAG members Mark Harrington, Gregg Bordowitz, Derek Link, Gregg Gonsalves and Peter Staley speak movingly about surviving the Aids plague.

Leviathan

France/United Kingdom/USA 2012

Directors: Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Véréna Paravel

Certificate 12A 86m 30s

given the unconventional way in which the film was made, with the script and story kept from the two leads so that from one moment to the next they had no idea what was around the corner, one might regard this deeply irrational villain as a stand-in for the writer/director himself, manipulating, testing and pushing his human playthings right to – and beyond – the limits, towards an ending half-planned, half-improvised and utterly unresolved.

So while all the signs in this vehicular horror thriller may point towards genre scenarios familiar from *Roadgames* (1981), *The Hitcher* (1986), *Wolf Creek* (2005) and *Gone* (2006), *Lovering* takes characters and viewers alike on a circular trip where choices, moral and otherwise, form narrative forks whose divergent paths keep leading in the same (non-) direction. In their confrontation with an evil trickster, Tom and Lucy are shown that what they most fear in the dark cuts both ways, as they perceive with horrified revulsion their own capacity, *in extremis*, for selfishness and murder. Add to this David Katznelson's tight camerawork and some very well-managed tension, and *Lovering*'s impressive feature debut travels an unsettling road to nowhere. **Ⓢ**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Nira Park
James Biddle

Story

Jeremy Lovering

Director of

Photography

David Katznelson

Editor

Jonathan Amos

Production

Designer

Jeff Sherriff

Music

Roly Porter

Daniel Pemberton

Sound Recordist

Ivor Talbot

Costume Designer

Rosa Dias

©Studiocanal

Limited/Channel

Four Television

Corporation

Production

Companies

Studiocanal and

Film4 present in

association with

Anton Capital

Entertainments a

Big Talk Pictures

production

Executive

Producers

Matthew Justice

Jenny Borgars

Danny Perkins

Katherine Butler

Cast

Alice Englert

Lucy

Iain De Caestecker

Tom

Allen Leech

Max

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Studiocanal Limited

7629ft +0 frames

See Feature
on page 44

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The phrase 'unchained camera' was coined in the 1920s, in reference to certain new films emerging from Germany. These were films that

exhibited a heretofore unimaginable freedom and range of motion – films like FW. Murnau's *The Last Laugh* or E.A. Dupont's *Variety*, whose breakneck, acrobatic, gravity-defiant camerawork suggested there was no limit to what this young medium might suddenly do, or how it might do it. It's the first phrase that popped into my mind while watching *Leviathan*, co-directed by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel. Now, *Leviathan* happens to be a documentary, and that's still a dirty word to certain aesthetes, but this is the polar opposite of the dry information-dump: wave-lashed from beginning to end, the lens often bejewelled with beads of seawater, *Leviathan* isn't 'dry' in any sense of the word.

The film begins in *medias res*, on the deck of a fishing trawler that's ploughing through a dark, unnamed ocean at the first light of dawn. Clad in primary-coloured rubbers, the crew are heaving away, hauling in a load. Who are these men? How long have they been out at sea? What exactly are they doing and how exactly are they going about it? Their voices, when they can be heard over the rattling chains, creaking winches and crashing surf, speak in American accents. There is no explanatory narration, and the only music is diegetic, snatches of heavy metal whose double-bass roll seems the most appropriate soundtrack to the grim mission at hand. The closing credits will finally state that we've been off the coast of New Bedford, Massachusetts – site of the Whalemans' Chapel in Melville's *Moby-Dick*. As for the rest, we're left to find out for ourselves, to get our own sea legs.

We become rather familiar with the crewmen's tattoos but learn very little of their personalities,

which are subsumed in the intensive work at hand. There is a moment of terse commiseration in which one crewman lights two cigarettes at the same time, handing one to his workmate. The most 'intimate', human scene comes towards the end of the film, when a beefy middle-aged fellow, exhausted by what is presented here as a life of incessant labour, is seen very gradually nodding off in the below-deck kitchen. It's one of only a handful of static, fixed compositions in *Leviathan*. In the opening shot, the POV is aligned to that of one of the crewmen, in constant, scrambling motion. Rather than separating the tasks that comprise life aboard a trawler into their component parts, gradually initiating the viewer, *Leviathan* chooses an immersive – or rather submersive – approach. It's as though we've been handed a slicker and a pair of waders, thrust out on to the rocking and rolling deck and told to get to work ourselves.

As depicted in Castaing-Taylor and Paravel's film, this voyage is no mere commercial fishing trip; it's a raiding party, engaged in a wholesale ransacking of the sea, hewing a path of destruction along the way. In one particularly potent image we see gouts of blood being disgorged into the water from the ship's scuppers. This is a war machine! A floating abattoir! Fish are gutted and cleaned; oily viscera and lopped fish heads slop and slide across the deck with the sway of the vessel. These leftover bits are unceremoniously tossed back to the sea, so that the gulls following in the ship's wake may feast on them.

The hulking crewmen, knives flickering as they fillet fish and shuck scallops, present a striking combination of brawn and dexterity. The same might be said of *Leviathan*, which is at once bruisingly physically and seemingly weightless. This weightlessness is attributable to Castaing-Taylor and Paravel's use of the GoPro camera, a rough-and-ready



Seafood surprise: *Leviathan*



waterproof model which first gained popularity with surfers and extreme sportsmen for its lightweight durability. At times, the GoPro is used to penetrate and probe, elevating the smallest of incidences into something mythic: we climb the inked-up forearms of one of the crewmen to study a ruddy face seamed with grit. By following a seemingly flightless seabird across the deck, and by staying with its unsuccessful attempts to scramble over a wooden slat, the filmmakers create an absorbing, self-contained drama of futility.

Elsewhere, the imagery is simply, bluntly majestic. Attaching the GoPro to a long pole, Castaing-Taylor and Paravel allowed the camera free range of motion on all sides of the ship, to skiff back and forth between water and sky, both teeming with life. Those black flocks with their clapping wings! My God, it's full of starfish! In one moment, we emerge suddenly from the brine and find ourselves face to face with the driving prow of the trawler. As the prow leaps above the waves, you hold your breath waiting for it to drop, and the *puuwwsshhh* impact registers right in your solar plexus.

Despite *Leviathan's* catalogued images of man behaving with matter-of-fact brutality towards nature, this is no environmental tract. Since 2006, Castaing-Taylor – best known for co-directing 2009's *Sweetgrass*, which wandered the Montana mountains in the thick of a sheep herd – has been conducting a 'Sensory Ethnography Lab' at Harvard's Film Study Center, an undertaking whose name succinctly summarises its aims. The idea is not to show you a way of life, but to show you how that way of life might feel.

While the voyages documented in *Leviathan* don't fundamentally differ from those that have been taken for hundreds of years from New Bedford, one imagines that even the crewmen themselves wouldn't recognise their livelihood as Castaing-Taylor and Paravel have rendered it. If *Leviathan* is suspect ethnography, though, it's staggering cinema – proof that there are more things in heaven and below the sea that you can imagine, that there are new images waiting to be discovered. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Lucien Castaing-Taylor Véronica Paravel	Ernst Karel	Produced in Sensory Ethnography Lab
Written by Lucien Castaing-Taylor Véronica Paravel	©Arrête Ton Cinéma	
Photographed by Lucien Castaing-Taylor Véronica Paravel	Production Companies Dogwoof presents a film by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véronica Paravel	In Colour [1.78:1]
Edited by Lucien Castaing-Taylor Véronica Paravel	With support from Cinereach, Creative Capital, Film Study Center, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Lef	Distributor Dogwoof Pictures
Sound McMillan-Stewart	Moving Image Fund, Foundation	7,785 ft +0 frames
Edit/Mix		

A documentary following the crew of a fishing trawler as they go about their daily rounds in the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Massachusetts. The men bring their hauls on board, clean and prepare the catch and dispose of the leftovers.

Love Tomorrow

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Christopher Payne
Certificate PG 79m 23s



False step: Max Brown and Begonia Cao

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

The best-known films set among ballet dancers portray emotional extremes – the clash between burning love and burning creativity in *The Red Shoes* (1948), mental unravelling in the face of professional inadequacy in *Black Swan* (2010) – perpetuating the notion of this particular artform and its practitioners as more than usually intense, febrile and delicate. This slight, mumblecore-inflected portrait of dancers adrift in London takes a more cynical tack: ballet's just another line of work, albeit one that's particularly hard to get into, and if you lose your job you're just another person out of work. "This art that you suffer for, that breaks our bodies," injured ballerina Eva scoffs at her dancer suitor Oriel, "it's not going to change anything."

Eva has cause to be both cynical and defensive, a deliberately inflicted injury having robbed her of a promising ballet career. The man who was supposed to save her, meanwhile, her fiancé, has betrayed her with a woman far less obviously special than she is. Eva's heartbroken scepticism provides an interesting centre for Christopher Payne's film – rather than portraying an artist sustained by a defining, driving passion, or a woman in the throes of discovering her own potency in the world, it gives us the opposite: an artist robbed of her means of expression, and a woman accepting that beauty and talent don't make her invincible. In the face of such existential challenges, Eva accepts the simple consolation of friendship from mercurial, boyish Oriel, who starts out trying to pick her up and ends by successfully lifting her.

A significant issue for dance films is the sourcing of dancers who can also act or actors who can persuasively dance. Michael Powell spent a year coaxing Moira Shearer to star in *The Red Shoes*, knowing that her combination of skills would be hard to match; and a certain controversy attended the rumoured use of stand-in dancers to pad out Natalie Portman's performance in *Black Swan*. *Love Tomorrow's* actors are very clearly dancers, which is to say that while their physical grace and charisma compel (Cindy Jourdain, the former Royal Ballet star who plays Eva, is so very gazelle-like that one imagines an actual gazelle might feel a bit lumpy and squinty in her presence), their delivery of lines is somewhat flat. Eva's interaction with Oriel (played by English National Ballet principal dancer Arionel Vargas)

all seems like slightly awkward preparation for us seeing them dance together – a treat that Payne eventually provides but keeps surprisingly brief and casual. He could have done with playing more to his leads' strengths, for while its low-key atmosphere echoes that of admired recent Brit flicks *The Comedian* and *Weekend*, the drama of this piece is a little too muted. Passions are stale or stifled, interaction a touch forced – while potentially interesting plot points, such as Oriel's past in Cuba, his interest in Yoruba religion and Eva's mysterious confession to her father that she's "unwell", go underexplored. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producer Stephanie Moon	@Love Tomorrow Ltd	Nelson Para
Written by Christopher Payne	Production Companies Rayla Films, LaLuna Films, Manila Productions	Pablo Begonia Cao
Director of Photography Paul Teverini		Sonya Stephen Brocklehurst
Editors Nick Calori Barry Moen	Cast Cindy Jourdain Eva, 'Maya'	Peter Miguel Altunaga Vito
Production Design Alexandra Walker	Arionel Vargas Oriel	In Colour [1.85:1]
Music Kevin Pollard	Max Brown Dominic	Distributor Soda Pictures
Sound Recorder Ludovic Lasserre	Samuel Barnett Cal	7,144 ft +8 frames
Costume Designer Matt Price	John McArdle Eva's father	

London, the present. Eva, a French-English ballerina in the throes of a relationship crisis, locks eyes with Cuban dancer Oriel on the Underground. He pursues her until she agrees to have a drink with him. Eva is less than forthcoming but indicates that she no longer dances. She accepts Oriel's invitation to join him for a performance at Sadler's Wells, where they watch from the wings. Afterwards they drink with the dancers; one of the dancers, Sonia, reacts jealously on seeing Oriel with Eva. Oriel tells Eva that his visa expires soon. Eva dodges calls from her fiancé Dominic, who has cheated on her. She and Oriel go to a party being held for choreographer Cal. Eva pretends to be Oriel's agent, but Cal recognises her from her dancing days. Eva gets drunk and aggressive and leaves; Oriel pursues her. The two go for coffee and Eva explains that her career was ended by injury when a partner deliberately dropped her in retaliation for her refusing his advances. They return to Oriel's flat to sleep. Eva talks to Dominic; he wants her back but she isn't sure. She attends an audition with Oriel but he doesn't get the part; without new visa arrangements, he will have to return to Cuba. Eva and Oriel visit Eva's father. They dance together in the park and then part.

Marius

France 2012
Director: Daniel Auteuil
Certificate 12A 93m 49s

Reviewed by Sue Harris

When the French reminisce about Marcel Pagnol films it isn't the glossy heritage adaptations of Claude Berri (*Jean de Florette*, *Manon des sources*) or Yves Robert (*La Gloire de mon père*, *Le Château de ma mère*) they tend to have in mind. Rather it's the black-and-white versions from the 30s and 40s, especially the celebrated 'Marseille Trilogy' of *Marius* (Alexander Korda, 1931), *Fanny* (Marc Allégret, 1932) and *César* (Pagnol, 1936), classics from the very early days of French sound cinema, full of memorable characters, sharp comic dialogue and melodramatic tales of lost love. These three remarkable films constitute one of the most beloved movie cycles in French cinema history, and while many well-intentioned remakes have been attempted over the years – in France, in the US, on stage, on television – none has yet measured up to the style and quality of the originals.

Daniel Auteuil's choice of material for his late career move into directing is therefore both daring and incredibly safe. Daring, because with *Marius* (as well as a 2011 adaptation of Pagnol's *The Well-Digger's Daughter* and a version of *Fanny*, released in France at the same time as *Marius*) he is treading on hallowed cinematic ground. The Marseille Trilogy is as untouchable a work as *Citizen Kane*. It can surely never be bettered, so why even try? But safe nevertheless, because Auteuil is a cherished figure in the Pagnol orbit, regarded with affection for his role as the illiterate peasant Ugolin in the Berri adaptations, and clearly in such thrall to the master that he is at pains to make a perfect replica of the original, polished only by the colour and clarity required for modern audiences fearful of the challenge of old black-and-white movies.

His *Marius* is both well made and confidently performed, and many of the set-piece gags of the original are reprised with great lightness of touch. But everything is imitated and impersonated with such precision – costumes, sets, dialogue, quirky secondary figures – that the effect is strangely uncinematic, as if the actors are somehow locked into a stage play, forced to enact the same scenes in the same way they always have been. What updating there is lies essentially in the visual



Dock savage: Raphaël Personnaz, Victoire Belezzy

aspect of the characters: Raphaël Personnaz is a smouldering, brooding Marius, all slicked-back hair and designer stubble, his neckerchief tied jauntily as if he were on a Paris catwalk. And as played by newcomer Victoire Belezzy, Marius's love interest Fanny is a feisty modern heroine, part Béatrice Dalle, part Audrey Tautou. However, Jean-Pierre Darroussin, as Marius's rival Panisse, is nowhere near ridiculous enough to be a plausible 'bad match' for Fanny, while Auteuil, though very able in the role of Marius's father César, conveys none of the social authority of the legendary Raimu in Korda's version.

Familiarity rather than innovation is, then, the watchword here. César's dockside bar is unchanged from 1931, and what new scenes there are amount to decorative bonuses: a boat trip, for example, adds nothing to the story but offers a glorious moment of Mediterranean tourism where the original kept us firmly in the bustling, working city. And that's the essential problem with Auteuil's version: Pagnol's work was always an expression of its time as much as its place, and his contemporary social drama about the complexities of family life and lineage is here rendered as just another heritage film, all lavish photography, pristine costumes and emotional close-ups. Pagnol's story, so relevant to French life in the inter-war years, has been buffed up for the 21st century but simultaneously emptied of all its social and political relevance. Ⓢ

Metallica Through the Never

Director: Nimród Antal
Certificate 15 92m 51s

Reviewed by Sam Davies

As *Metallica Through the Never* nears its climax, a towering statue of blindfolded Justice with scales rises up from the stage and then, at the appropriate moment, bursts apart in a cascade of masonry. It's not a bad metaphor for a dynamic at the heart of heavy metal: the music is often as massive, monumental and as carefully designed as architecture, but what it really craves is maximum destruction. Metal loves ruins.

Through the Never makes this point repeatedly throughout its 90 minutes as it ransacks Metallica's back-catalogue and blasts its way through a greatest-hits concert. Director Nimród Antal has no previous music projects on his CV, although his most recent feature, *Predators* (2010), was based on a scenario that could have come straight from a heavy-metal lyric sheet or album cover, with an assortment of expert killers being pursued across a jungle planet by terrifyingly powerful alien hunters.

It's actually Antal's 2003 debut *Kontroll* that's evoked in *Through the Never's* opening: as young roadie Trip skateboards through the concrete bowels of the concert arena, hood up and face covered by a scarf, he echoes similar sequences from the earlier film (in which a serial killer haunts the Budapest subway system). But Antal handles Metallica in performance with total assurance, juggling viewpoints and picking up on details such as bassist Rob Trujillo's back-breaking crouch-cum-walk, or drummer Lars Ulrich's manic gargoyles faces and his tendency to pop triumphantly off his drum stool at the end of a song like a jack-in-the-box.

Linking the songs together, and occasionally working as an oblique illustration of them, is a narrative subplot in which Trip, played by Dane DeHaan, risks life and limb amid increasingly dystopian urban disorder to recover a lost leather bag for the band. Antal wisely keeps plot and dialogue in these scenes to a minimum, and they remain subordinate rather than parallel to the performance. That they work is a credit to DeHaan, who (as in *The Place Beyond the Pines*) brings a strangely watchable quality: looking like a shifty, almost

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Alain Sarde
Jérôme Seydoux

Written by
Daniel Auteuil
Based on the work
of Marcel Pagnol

**Director of
Photography**
Jean-François Robin
Editor
Joëlle Hache
Production Designer
Christian Marti

Music
Alexandre Desplat
Sound
Henri Morelle
Jean Goudier
Thomas Gauder

Costume Designer
Pierre-Yves Gayraud

©A.S. Films, Zack
Films, Pathé
Production
**Production
Companies**

A co-production
of A.S. Films, Zack
Films, Pathé
with the participation
of Canal+ and Ciné+
In association with
La Banque Postale
Image 6, Palatine
Étoile 10, Indéfيلم,
COFIMAGE 24
with the support of
La Région Provence
Alpes Côte d'Azur
In partnership with

le Centre National
du Cinéma et de
l'Image Animée

Cast

Daniel Auteuil
César
Raphaël Personnaz
Marius
**Jean-Pierre
Darroussin**
Panisse
Victoire Belezzy

Fanny
Marie-Anne Chazel
Honorine
Nicolas Vaude
Monsieur Brun
Daniel Russo
Escartefigue
Rufus
Piquoiseau
**Jean-Louis
Barcelona**
Frisepoulet
Dolby Digital

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles
Distributor
Pathé Productions
8,443ft +8 frames

Marseille, the 1930s. Marius works in his father César's dockside bar. Marius longs to run away to sea but César, a widower, wants him to settle down and marry Fanny, who works on the seafront with her fishmonger mother Honorine. When Honorine contemplates a financially advantageous marriage for Fanny with the much older Monsieur Panisse, Marius is enraged but refuses to give up his dreams of adventure. Fanny declares her love


for him, persuading him to commit to her just when he has a chance of a place on a ship departing for the colonies. But Marius is still restless, and when a second opportunity presents itself, Fanny realises that she must let him go. She tricks him into abandoning her by feigning renewed interest in Monsieur Panisse's proposition. As Marius's ship sets sail, Fanny is left alone with César, who is yet to learn that his beloved son has gone.



Roadie Trip: Dane DeHaan

ferrety younger brother of Leonardo DiCaprio, he gives the impression that he might bolt from the set at any time.

Film references abound. The moment Trip watches as a police horse bolts across a junction ahead of him, dragging its rider, on fire, behind him, spells trouble with all the economy of the dog carrying a human hand in its mouth in *Yojimbo*. The villain of this narrative subplot is – surely – a deliberate nod to Bane as seen in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises*: massively built, features hidden by a gas-mask, leading a mob in a war on order. (As with Nolan's film, the nature of this villain implies a deeply authoritarian worldview – and how easily that sits with the standard metal outlaw pose is one for sociologists of the scene.) *Fight Club*'s climactic demolition gets a nod, and the bag that Trip has been sent to recover is a macguffin in the most classic sense, its contents, like the briefcases in *Pulp Fiction* and *Ronin*, never revealed.

The other way in which *Through the Never* aspires to be a concert-film-plus is its use of 3D, and here Antal is particularly assured. Rather than launch whatever he can whenever he can out of the screen, he carefully observes spatial logic: the band are never brought forward out of their immediate setting to float like weird cut-outs. In recognising that 3D can be used as much to emphasise the depth of a background (here the cavernous bowl of a concert arena) as the proximity of a foreground, Antal makes *Through the Never* a much more immersive experience than many 3D films. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Charlotte Huggins

Written by
Nimród Antal
James Hetfield
Lars Ulrich
Kirk Hammett
Robert Trujillo

Director of Photography
Gyula Pados

Edited by
Joe Hutshing

Production Designer
Helen Jarvis

Music
Metallica
Sound Designer
Mark Mangini
Costume Designer
Carla Hetland

Production Companies
Picturehouse

presents a
Blackened
production

Executive Producers
James Hetfield
Lars Ulrich
Kirk Hammett
Robert Trujillo

Cliff Burnstein
Peter Mensch
Tony Diciochio
Marc Reiter
Doug Merrifield

Cast

Dane DeHaan
Trip

Metallica
James Hetfield
Lars Ulrich
Kirk Hammett
Robert Trujillo
themselves

**Dolby Atmos
In Colour**
[2.35:1]
Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
E1 Films

8,356ft +8 frames
IMAX prints:
134,856 ft

A concert film in which Metallica perform songs from their 32-year career in an unnamed North American city. Running alongside the performance is a fictional subplot in which a roadie, Trip, is sent out from the venue to recover an important item for the group. On his way he is involved in a collision and then a riot. In the melee between rioters and police he is picked out by the rioters' leader, a masked figure on horseback. While being chased by the rider and his men, Trip finds the band's missing bag (its contents are not revealed). He is eventually cornered by the rider but defeats him. Returning to the concert venue with the mysterious bag, Trip finds that he has missed the concert, but is able to watch the band jam on stage in the empty arena as the credits roll.

Milius

USA 2013

Directors: Joey Figueroa, Zak Knutson

Certificate 15 103m 23s



Big shot: John Milius


Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Like Craig McCall's *Cameraman* (2010), about Jack Cardiff, and Gilles Penso's *Ray Harryhausen: Special Effects Titan* (2011), Zak Knutson and Joey Figueroa's feature-length portrait of a pivotal creative figure of 1970s and early 1980s American cinema breaks no formal ground (it's broadly a DVD extra writ large) but the parade of talking heads is similarly enhanced by an exceptional number of luminaries: Francis Coppola, Richard Dreyfuss, Clint Eastwood, Harrison Ford, James Earl Jones, George Lucas, Walter Murch, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Paul Schrader, Martin Scorsese, Steven Spielberg, Oliver Stone, Robert Zemeckis and many others – all regarding John Milius with immense personal affection to this day.

It's also arguable, since Milius clearly sees himself as a great storyteller in the manner of Homer and Melville (both namechecked), that this oral-history approach is ideal, as story after story about him is trotted out, often accompanied by laughter, a shake of the head or an acknowledgement that it might not be entirely true but what the hell. Milius would no doubt thoroughly approve, having first constructed a mythical image of himself when still a teenager, his dream of going to Vietnam and dying in a blaze of glory abruptly cut short when asthma rendered him unfit to serve – hence his Kurosawa-inspired decision to turn to film directing, the closest equivalent to a battlefield general that he could plausibly attain.

The film isn't, however, a slavish hagiography. While it posits Milius as the often unsung hero

of post-1970 American cinema, it provides plenty of supporting evidence (even uncredited work such as Dirty Harry's "make my day" catchphrase, or the 'Indianapolis' speech in *Jaws*, left indelible impressions on the culture) and also makes it clear that the man was frequently his own worst enemy. The mythmaking could prove destructive: he may have pulled a gun on a studio executive but they knew each other well, vital context squeezed out of the Chinese-whispers version which, when combined with Milius's outspoken rightwing politics (again, reality is more complicated than rumour), explains why an increasingly corporate and nervous Hollywood was reluctant to work with this self-styled loose cannon. Schwarzenegger pooh-poohs Milius's notion that there was a political blacklist (after all, Arnie did OK), but Milius found it increasingly hard to get projects bankrolled, solid hits like *Conan the Barbarian* (1981) and *Red Dawn* (1984) notwithstanding (British TV nostalgists will enjoy Barry Norman's savaging of the latter).

Given that Milius has enlivened other documentaries (notably 1991's *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*) with original contributions, it's initially surprising and disappointing that his appearances here come mostly from archive interviews. The reason is laid bare in the film's final act: in 2010 Milius was felled by a debilitating stroke which initially robbed him entirely of the power of speech (spoken and written), and from which he has not fully recovered. The camera catches the moment when he successfully 

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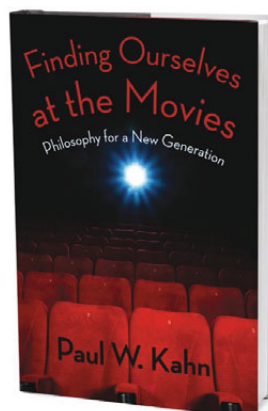
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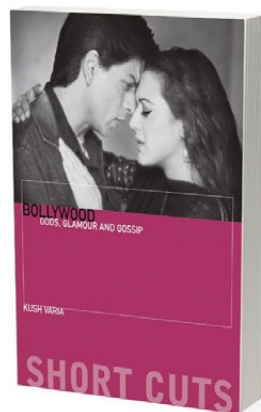
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shoots a clay pigeon at the third attempt – corny as hell in a fictional film but oddly moving here, although a true Milius character would have accompanied it with a lengthy yet immensely quotable speech. But since the film concludes with the news that Milius's Genghis Khan dream project is still in development, who's to say that we won't hear another one? ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Joey Figueroa
Zak Knutson
Ken Plume
Edited by
Zak Knutson
Score Composed by
Daniel Sternbaum
Supervising Sound Editor/
Re-recording Mixer
Zach Martin

[none given]
Production Companies
Haven
Entertainment in association with O.G.B. present a Chop Shop Entertainment production
A film by Zak Knutson & Joey Figueroa
Fred, Occasional Giant Beard Inc., Haven
Executive Producers
Matthew Perniciaro
Kevin Mann
Scott Mosier
Film Extracts
Apocalypse Now (1979)
Dirty Harry (1971)
Red Dawn (1984)
Jaws (1975)
The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean (1972)
The Wind and the Lion (1975)
Shichinin no Samurai/Seven Samurai (1954)
Glut (1967)
Electronic Labyrinth THX 1138 4EB (1967)
Marcello l'm So

Bored (1967)
Rape Squad (1980)
Black Mama, White Mama (1973)
The Devil's 8 (1969)
Evel Knievel (1971)
Magnum Force (1973)
Jeremiah Johnson (1972)
Hell's Angels (1930)
Dillinger (1973)
Star Wars (1977)
Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1963)
Beach Blanket Bingo (1965)
Big Wednesday (1978)
Conan the Barbarian (1981)
The Hunt for Red October (1990)
The Big Lebowski (1998)
1941 (1979)
Farewell to the King (1988)

With
John Milius
Kurt Sutter
Sam Elliott
Arnold Schwarzenegger
Bryan Singer
Michael Mann
Kathleen Kennedy
Matthew Weiner
Francis Ford Coppola
Steven Spielberg
Richard Dreyfuss
Harrison Ford
George Lucas
Martin Scorsese
Bob Gale
Oliver Stone

Randall Kleiser
Ethan Milius
Amanda Milius
Walter Murch
William Phelps
Don Glut
Lawrence Gordon
Peter Bart
Mike Medavoy
Al Ruddy
George Hamilton
Elvis Mitchell
Clint Eastwood
Frank Wells
Paul Schrader
Buzz Feitshans
Robert Zemeckis
Charlie Sheen
Gerry Lopez
Sylvester Stallone
Denny Aaberg
William Katt
Andre Morgan
Nat Segaloff
Bill Cody
James Earl Jones
Powers Boothe
Darren Dalton
Leah Thompson
Lorenzo di Bonventura
Ed O'Neill
Mace Neufeld
John Plaster
John Powers

In Colour
[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Studiocanal Limited

9,304 ft +8 frames

A chronological portrait of John Milius, told through archive interviews with the writer-director as well as numerous film clips and reminiscences from friends, colleagues and admirers. Born in St Louis, Missouri, in 1944, Milius was seven when he moved to California, where he discovered surfing, guns, motorcycles, the classics and a lifelong admiration for Theodore Roosevelt. Judged medically unfit to serve in Vietnam, he studied film at the University of Southern California. He established a name as a screenwriter with 'Jeremiah Johnson' and 'The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean' (and worked uncredited on 'Dirty Harry' and 'Jaws'), parlaying this into directing 'Dillinger' in 1973 and 'The Wind and the Lion' in 1975. While Francis Coppola filmed his 'Apocalypse Now' script, Milius himself shot the intensely personal 'Big Wednesday' (1978), his first flop. 'Conan the Barbarian' (1981) and 'Red Dawn' (1984) were commercial hits, but the latter's rightwing politics made Milius a pariah in liberal Hollywood: he made only two more features. After achieving television success as co-creator of 'Rome', Milius planned a film about Genghis Khan but suffered a serious stroke in 2010, from which he is gradually recovering.

Pandora's Promise

USA 2013
Director: Robert Stone

Reviewed by Thomas Dawson

Considering that he began his filmmaking career with an Oscar-nominated documentary about atomic testing on Bikini Atoll in the 1940s, *Pandora's Promise* represents something of a volte-face for its director, "passionate environmentalist" Robert Stone.

Drawing on the personal testimonies of renowned scientists and environmental activists who themselves were once strongly opposed to nuclear energy, Stone asserts that embracing nuclear power is now humanity's only option, if we wish to preserve modern civilisation. Our dependence on fossil fuels has catastrophically damaged the climate through carbon-dioxide emissions, and wind and solar power will not be sufficient in themselves to meet global energy needs.

Visiting the exclusion zone at Fukushima and the damaged reactor at Chernobyl, Stone addresses fears around human exposure to radiation, safety procedures at power plants and the disposal of waste, maintaining that the popular conflation of atomic weapons and nuclear energy has hindered the pro-nuclear cause. It's a persuasive argument, although the film significantly marginalises protesters who disagree with Stone's convictions. ☹



Atomic love: Robert Stone and Mark Lynas

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Robert Stone
Jim Swartz
Susan Swartz
Written by
Robert Stone
Cinematography
Robert Stone
Howard Shack
Editor
Don Kleszy
Original Score
Gary Lionelli
Sound Designer
Coli Anderson

©Pandora's

Promise, LLC
Production Companies
Impact Partners presents in association with CNN Films and Vulcan Productions a Robert Stone film
Made with the generous support of Impact Partners
Executive Producers
Dan Cogan
Eric Dobkin
J. Lynn Dougan

Gavin Dougan
Diana Dougan
Steve Kirsch
Ross Koningstein

Dolby Digital In Colour

Distributor
November Films

A documentary asking how the world's ever-increasing energy needs can be met, and arguing that nuclear power must be embraced, given the limitations of renewable energy sources and the damage caused to the global climate by the burning of fossil fuels. Incorporating archive footage and interviews with eminent scientists and environmental activists once vehemently opposed to nuclear energy, director Robert Stone visits the sites of the disasters at Fukushima and Chernobyl, and explains why he too has been converted to the pro-nuclear cause.

Parkland

USA 2013
Director: Peter Landesman
Certificate 15 93m 42s

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

In the US, there may not be any single 20th-century subject as exhausted by the oceanic tide of discourse that has washed over it than the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Oliver Stone was a latecomer to this deathless spawning, an ongoing profusion of hermeneutics so intensely varied and obsessive that it long ago gave up being 'about' one troubling day in Dallas and became a self-propagating text-monster articulating a distinctly American brand of existential anxiety. By now JFK-ology is a national neurosis, often latent but always stirring and always posing terrified questions about meaning, history, power and even perception that most of us pretend not to hear.

There's a good reason why the assassination persists in the cultural skull as it does: it's a movie, and was from its first micro-instant – if Abraham Zapruder hadn't committed the scene to 8mm, we might be pondering the event's minutiae only as often as we hyper-analyse the bombing of Pearl Harbor or the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. Being cinema, the assassination is inherently atomisable, a time-travel quantity we can rewind and re-examine at will, searching for significances and tropes we may have previously missed. Stone knew it, and his *JFK* (1991) is as much a poststructuralist piece of cinema analysis as it is the only Hollywood film to delve into 'deep politics'.

Is more cinema necessary? One cannot be blamed for facing the prospect of *Parkland* – a eulogy-film semi-indie set largely in the titular Dallas hospital on 22 and 23 November 1963 – with exhaustion. But Peter Landesman's film, his first, doesn't traffic in conspiracy speculation, nor does he wax Camelotian for the dead president's extinguished promise. The agenda is more fundamental: revisit the emotional experience on the ground, with its inherent limitations of knowledge, its palpitating sense of trauma, its ominous feeling of a modern era instantly ignited, in which nothing is exactly how it may seem. Landesman begins in the morning, following a handful of Dallas citizens – eager camera bug Zapruder (Paul Giamatti), greenhorn ER doc Jim Carrico (Zac Efron), officious head nurse Doris Nelson (Marcia Gay Harden), office clerk Robert Oswald (James Badge Dale) and so on – glancing off them hurriedly while seamlessly mixing in archival news footage as the motorcade approaches. (The film manages to give every shot the sense of a faded, panicky news-crew effort from 1963, but never obtrusively.) Then, it happens, but all we see is Giamatti's Zapruder filming, in mounting horror.

From there the movie slows to an almost real-time crawl through suffering, incorporating almost two dozen points of view and focusing on nothing beyond the electric daze of emergency tension. The whole film goes into shock; the shepherding of JFK's still-alive body into the ER, the futile efforts to save him and the long pause after they give up, with everyone blood-smeared and not knowing what to do next – it's a step-by-step tribulation that takes almost a third of the film's running time. (It climaxes, more or less, with the appearance of a gore-soaked Jacqueline Kennedy, seen mostly from the back,

Romeo & Juliet

United Kingdom/USA/Italy 2013

Director: Carlo Carlei

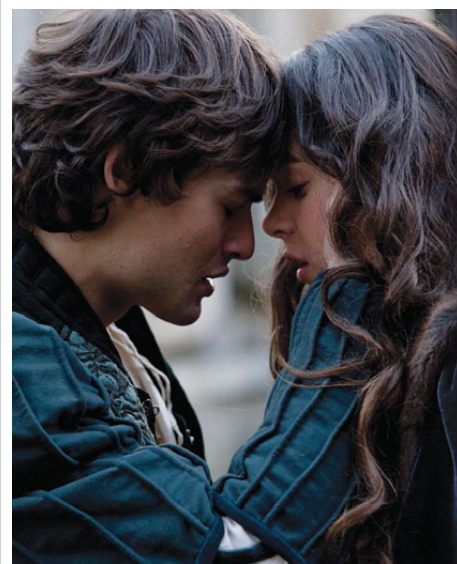
Certificate PG 118m 0s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

If every generation gets the movie version of *Romeo and Juliet* it deserves, today's teenagers have a lot to answer for. Italian director Carlo Carlei's Cinecittà-shot variation on the Bard's immortal tale boasts (if that's the right word) a script by Julian Fellowes which trades iambic pentameter for more traditional dialogue – a gambit that might have paid off if every other line hadn't been an anachronistic cliché. When the mortally wounded Mercutio (Christian Cooke) ruminates that “the best intentions pave the way to hell” he's not merely coining a catchy phrase but accurately diagnosing Fellowes's botched experiment in literary adaptation. Even an inveterate meddler like Baz Luhrmann understood that when it comes to the most enduring romance in the history of the English language, it's probably better to leave well enough alone.

The added words are hardly the only problem here, however. Carlei's filmmaking is thuddingly conventional and only superficially handsome: the Italian locations are lovely but the cutting in and out of scenes is notably awkward. And his casting is truly disastrous, starting with Hailee Steinfeld as Juliet. In the Coen brothers' sterling 2010 remake of *True Grit*, the then 14-year-old held her own with heavyweights like Jeff Bridges and Josh Brolin, and was every bit as tough and precocious as the role demanded. Here, she's asked to play tremulous and tender and comes off as merely blank, an aimless amateur rather than a beguiling ingénue.

Douglas Booth's Romeo isn't much better, and the actor is so blandly handsome that it's possible to miss his initial entrance into the fray. The camera is far more taken with Kodi-Smit McPhee's Benvolio, and considering how well he did as a star-crossed lover in *Let Me In* (2010) it's possible that *Romeo and Juliet* could have been improved with him in the title role. With his nervous-owl eyes, he's a more plausibly vulnerable teenager than the 21-year-old Burberry model Booth, who looks far more comfortable swaggering through a chic masked ball (a beautifully art-directed sequence) than quietly yearning for his lover in



Star-crossed: Douglas Booth, Hailee Steinfeld



G-man on the spot: Billy Bob Thornton

wandering in and cupping a palmful of brain, which Harden's pro nurse shakily scoops into a bowl.) Landesman does something remarkably unAmerican here – he doesn't try to impose three-act structures or dramatic form on to the events but instead gets intimate with the panoply of reaction, and takes a mostly lyrical observational position. The drama has exploded off screen, and we're here for the human fallout.

This turns every mundane-but-secret aspect of process into a breathtaking set piece – from the last rites to the packing of the ruined clothes to the uncomfortable loading of the casket to Zapruder's film-development ordeal as compelled by the FBI and Secret Service to the Sisyphean task of carrying the coffin up the Air Force One step-ladder and through the too-small doorway (which had to be hurriedly cut larger with a saw). That every tense backroom screening of Zapruder's footage, as the frantic investigation begins, is prefaced by shots of his lawn-frolicking grandchildren, is a deep-dish irony Landesman returns to again and again. Small spits of dramatic orthodoxy do emerge – as when Rory Cochrane's Texas medical examiner attempts to keep the body in town for an autopsy, only to be met with the appalled fury of humbled Secret Service agents – but these almost always wilt in the shadow of the larger crisis, which of course is not ongoing but over in an instant, and seems to have changed everything.

The exception to Landesman's rigour is the treatment of the Oswald family. We only see Lee Harvey in a single prison-visit scene (Jeremy Strong bears an uncanny resemblance), because the focus is on his brother Robert and his crazy Louisianan mother Marguerite (Jacki Weaver), the former a complete innocent caught peripherally in the grinder of history, the latter a loudmouth matriarch wingnut who believed to her dying day that Lee was a top-secret US superspy. Landesman clearly did not have the zookeeper's chops required to keep Weaver under control, and Dale's earnestness is a forced quantity, especially in light of the natural woundedness radiating off the rest of the cast, even the buttoned-down fed played by Billy Bob Thornton. (“Jesus Christ!” he spontaneously blurts when he sees the 8mm film for the first time.)

The ironies of history do a lot of the work – from the hospital staff's perspective, no work of fiction could've brought them the head-shattered

president one day and then two days later, through the same doors, his bullet-peppered assassin. (Landesman only entertains the lone-assassin scenario, because in November 1963 that's all anyone in Dallas could imagine.) What pulses through the movie is actually something fairly simple and universal – the upending dread of modern social calamity, when violence we couldn't imagine forces us to face our own incredible and privileged innocence. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Tom Hanks
Gary Goetzman
Bill Paxton
Nigel Sinclair
Matt Jackson
Written by
Peter Landesman
Based on the book *Four Days in November* by Vincent Bugliosi
Director of Photography
Barry Ackroyd
Editor
Leo Trombetta
Production Designer
Bruce Curtis
Music
James Newton Howard
Re-recording Mixers
Michael Minkler
Tony Lamberti
Greg Townsend
Costume Designer
Kari Perkins

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Production Companies

Exclusive Media presents in association with The American Film Company and Millennium Entertainment a Playtone/Exclusive Media production
Executive Producers
Guy East
Brian Falk
Joe Ricketts
Steve Shoresian
Ginger Sledge
Lauren Selig

Cast

James Badge Dale
Robert Oswald
Mark Duplass
Kenneth O'Donnell
Zac Efron
Dr Charles
'Jim' Carrico
Jackie Earle Haley
Father Oscar Huber
Colin Hanks
Dr Malcolm Perry

David Harbour

Gordon Shanklin
Marcia Gay Harden
Nurse Doris Nelson
Ron Livingston
James Hosty
Austin Nichols
Emory Roberts
Jeremy Strong
Lee Harvey Oswald
Billy Bob Thornton
Forrest Sorrels
Jacki Weaver
Marguerite Oswald
Tom Welling
Roy Kellerman
Paul Giamatti
Abraham Zapruder

Dolby Digital/SDDS
In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor
Koch Media
Entertainment

8,433 ft +0 frames

Dallas, Texas, 22 November 1963. President John F. Kennedy's motorcade is passing through the city. Abraham Zapruder is filming with his home-movie camera as the president is assassinated. A variety of citizens are affected, including Zapruder, the staff at Parkland Hospital, the president's shocked security detail and Lee Harvey Oswald's brother Robert. A dazed Zapruder is compelled by the FBI to process and print his footage, the Oswalds wrestle with their warped family dynamic, and law-enforcement officers struggle to understand what protocol they should follow. Lee Harvey Oswald is arrested for the killing but is himself assassinated on 24 November. The president's body is flown out. At Oswald's unattended burial, his brother Robert must beg journalists to be pallbearers.

exile. He's consistently overwhelmed by Paul Giamatti as Friar Laurence, whose tragic arc actually registers more strongly than those of his young charges. (Giamatti's look of horror on discovering the lovers dead is the only lingering image in the entire movie.)

The other members of the ensemble do little to distinguish themselves, though Damian Lewis at least gets to open his mouth a little bit wider as the tantrum-prone Lord Capulet than he does as the chronically tight-lipped domestic terrorist on TV's *Homeland*. Carlei has hired iconic performers like Stellan Skarsgård (as Prince Escalus) and *Barry Lyndon*'s great, glowering Leon Vitali (as the Apothecary), and yet they don't adorn the film so much as get swallowed up by the surrounding mediocrity. Nobody outside the costume department seems to have taken much pride in their work on this production, and the result is less a tale of woe than a tale woefully told. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Ileen Maisel Lawrence Elman Julian Fellowes Nadja Swarovski Simon Bosanquet Alexander Koll Dimitra Tsingou Doug Mankoff Andrew Spaulding Screenplay Julian Fellowes Adapted from the play by William Shakespeare Director of Photography David Tattersall Editor Peter Honess Production Designer Tonino Zera Music Composed by Abel Korzeniowski Sound Mixer Tullio Morganti Costume Designer Carlo Poggioni	Entertainment and Blue Lake Media Fund present an Amber Entertainment production in association with Indiana Production Company and Echo Lake Entertainment A film by Carlo Carlei Produced with the assistance of Regione Lazio – Regional Fund for Cinema and Audiovisual Executive Producers Markus Langes-Swarovski Steven Silver Neil Tabatznik Marco Cohen Benedetto Habib Fabrizio Donvito Philip Alberstat Jackie Walsh John Walsh III Cast Hailee Steinfeld Juliet Capulet Douglas Booth Romeo Montague	Tomas Arana Lord Montague Christian Cooke Mercutio Damian Lewis Lord Capulet Natascha McElhone Lady Capulet Lesley Manville Nurse Laura Morante Lady Montague Kodi Smit-McPhee Benvolio Ed Westwick Tybalt Tom Wisdom Count Paris Leon Vitali Apothecary Stellan Skarsgård Prince of Verona Paul Giamatti Friar Laurence Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd 10,620 ft +0 frames
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Verona, Italy, the 16th-century. Prince Escalus has arranged a public tournament to defuse the tensions between two wealthy families, the Montagues and the Capulets, but the result only inflames their mutual hatred. Montague's son Romeo is initially smitten by Capulet's niece Rosaline. However, he subsequently falls in love with Capulet's beloved daughter Juliet, who is to be married to the eligible Count Paris. She reciprocates Romeo's affection, enraging family members on both sides, especially her cousin Tybalt. During a confrontation in the street, Tybalt slays Romeo's friend Mercutio. Romeo avenges Mercutio's death by killing Tybalt, and is banished by the Prince. Friar Laurence contrives to reunite the lovers by having Juliet fake her death via a sleeping potion, but the illusion proves too convincing: a distraught Romeo returns to Verona and, after dispatching Paris in a duel, makes plans to commit suicide by his beloved's side. Juliet wakes from her induced coma only to see Romeo succumb to a deadly poison. She fatally wounds herself with a dagger. At Romeo and Juliet's joint funeral, the Montagues and Capulets renounce their blood feud.

Runner Runner

USA 2013
Director: Brad Furman
Certificate 15 91m 23s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Calamitous miscasting and an achingly predictable plot progression make this gambling-themed thriller even worse than one might reasonably expect.

Spot-on as the weaselly Sean 'Napster' Parker in *The Social Network* (2010), Justin Timberlake barely conveys the moral scruples behind his protagonist's realisation that his glamorous new job in online gaming is founded on an untenable level of corruption. To be fair, though, the script itself manages only the merest semblance of disapproval for the bribery that sustains magnate Ben Affleck's Costa Rica-based online gaming empire – and is remarkably tolerant of the concept of casino-style websites – busying itself instead for a final-reel caper-style reversal that remains resolutely surprise-free.

A younger Affleck could have done a bit more with the cocksure role inhabited by Timberlake but proves an uneasy match for the greed-driven, two-dimensional über-villain he plays here, whose quick-fire cynicism might have been rather more amusing if delivered by a performer (Robert Downey Jr, say) more practised in the art. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Arnon Milchan Jennifer Davisson Killoran Leonardo DiCaprio Michael Shamberg Stacey Sher Brian Koppelman David Levien Written by Brian Koppelman David Levien Director of Photography Mauro Fiore Film Editor Jeff McEvoy Production Designer Charisse Cardenas Music Christophe Beck Production Sound Mixer Steve Morantz Costume Designer Sophie de Rakoff ©Regency Entertainment (USA), Inc. (in the U.S. only) ©Monarchy Enterprises S.A.R.L. (in all other territories)	Production Companies Regency Enterprises presents a New Regency/Appian Way/Double Feature Films production Executive Producers Erik Holmberg Brad Weston Cast Justin Timberlake Richie Furst Gemma Arterton Rebecca Shafran Anthony Mackie FBI Special Agent Shavers Ben Affleck Ivan Block Michael Esper Billy 'Pet' Petricoff John Heard Harry Furst Ben Schwartz Craig Dolby Digital/Datasat In Colour Prints by DeLuxe [2.35:1]	Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK) 8,224ft +8 frames
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Princeton University, present day. Business student Richie Furst is admonished by the dean for taking a commission to involve fellow students in online gambling. Struggling to pay his tuition fees, Richie loses his life savings on a poker website. Probability analysis reveals that the site cheated him, so he travels to Costa Rica and meets with the CEO, online gaming magnate Ivan Block, who is impressed enough to give him a job. Soon Richie is living the high life as Block's protégé and begins a secret liaison with his boss's lover Rebecca Shafran. Before long, however, Richie discovers the corruption and financial malpractice underpinning Block's empire. Learning that Block is about to leave the country and pin everything on him, Richie outwits him by counter-bribing the local authorities. He delivers Block to the FBI and flies off with Rebecca.

Rurouni Kenshin

Japan 2012
Director: Otomo Keishi
Certificate 15 134m 14s

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

This sword-swinging Japanese period adventure comes from a long comic of the same name by Watsuki Nobuhiro, previously adapted in multiple animated series. The new film's director is Otomo Keishi (unrelated to the animation director Otomo Katsuhiro), who's already preparing two sequels.

For viewers coming to the story new, *Rurouni Kenshin* is an unambitiously entertaining genre piece for the first hour of its 134 minutes. Its mostly bright colours cancel any expectation of historical accuracy. The plot – an outsider fights to protect a benighted community – is pleasantly archetypal, and a reminder of how much western and eastern hero myths have in common, especially on film.

However, the action becomes terribly stretched in its second hour. Kagawa Teruyuki plays an opium-smuggling businessman, one of the main villains, with a permanent sneer so preposterously pantomime that he makes the conflict hard to take even semi-seriously. One might also object that the hero Sato Takeru looks far too young (and bland) to be a veteran assassin and warrior, though he at least fights well. Ironically, though, the best duel is a food-brandishing fight in a kitchen in which he doesn't figure. If *Rurouni Kenshin* were pruned back to such highlights, it would be a far better film. **C**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Kubota Osamu Screenplay Fuji Kiyomi Otomo Keishi Original manga <i>Rurouni Kenshin: Meiji Kenkaku Romantan</i> by Watsuki Nobuhiro Director of Photography Ishizaka Takuro Editor Imai Tsuyoshi Production Designer Hashimoto So Music Sato Naoki Sound Recording Masuko Hiroaki Costume Design Sawataishi Kazuhiro Action Supervisor Tanigaki Kenji ©"Rurouni Kenshin" Film Partners Production Companies Warner Bros. Pictures Japan presents in association with	"Rurouni Kenshin" Film Partners a C&I Entertainment production Executive Producer Koichi Hirooshi Cast Sato Takeru Himura Kenshin Takei Emi Kamiya Kaoru Kikkawa Koji Jine Udo Aoi Yu Takani Megumi Aoki Munetaka Sagara Sanosuke Ayano Go Gein Sudo Genki Inui Banjin Tanaka Taketo Myojin Yahiko Okuda Eiji Yamagata Aritomo Eguchi Yosuke Saito Hajime Kagawa Teruyuki Takeda Kanryu Dolby Digital In Colour	[2.35:1] Subtitles Distributor Warner Bros Distributors (UK) 12,081 ft +0 frames
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Japan, the 1870s, in the aftermath of the victory of the Imperial regime over the shogun. Wandering swordsman Himura Kenshin was once a samurai assassin and war hero, but now renounces killing. In Tokyo, he intervenes in a battle between Kamiya Kaoru, heiress to a kendo school, and a murderer called Udo Jin-e, who stole Kenshin's old battle sword. Kenshin defends Kaoru's school from Jin-e and his master, villainous opium smuggler Takeda Kanryu. Kenshin eventually defeats Kanryu; Jin-e kidnaps and tries to kill Kaoru but she survives. Defeated, Jin-e commits suicide. Kenshin stays with Kaoru.

Saving Mr. Banks

USA/United Kingdom/Australia 2013

Director: John Lee Hancock

Certificate PG 125m 15s

See Industry
section,
page 16

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

A spoonful of sugar, as the song goes, helps the medicine go down – and the prospect of a true-life drama in which Walt Disney himself wins over author P.L. Travers to land the screen rights to *Mary Poppins* does rather suggest the triumph of all-American commercialism topped by a sugary dusting of sentiment. Well, there are indeed tears before bedtime here, but the surprise is that they're fully earned by this gracefully turned, substantial and mature musing on the complex weave of unresolved childhood pain and restorative fictive reclamation in a classic work of children's literature and the much-loved movie it inspired. In a sense, it's unlikely subject-matter, since we know from the start that, notwithstanding Emma Thompson's splendidly clipped hauteur as Pamela Travers, she will eventually put aside her misgivings about the crass Disneyfication of her most treasured creation; Tom Hanks's homespun yet steely studio boss will prevail – and animated penguins, Dick Van Dyke's positively surreal cockney accent and an Oscar for Julie Andrews will thence ensue. The devil really is in the detail, however, and what unfolds is a story that's possibly little known, except to readers of Valerie Lawson's biography of Travers, which is acknowledged as a source for Kelly Marcel and Sue Smith's screenplay.

The tweedy English lady we see here actually grew up in rural Australia, and as the film cuts back and forth in time a journey of discovery takes shape, bordered then by the little girl's love for her volatile, charismatic souse of a dad (Colin Farrell, bringing genuine richness and integrity to a role that could have been Oirish cliché) and now by the older artist's fierce protection of her written portrait of another flawed patriarch, Mr Banks (eventually played in the film of *Mary Poppins* by David Tomlinson, and destined for a happier ending courtesy of a certain magical supernanny). The construction is canny enough to make viewers feel as if they're piecing together a jigsaw: the junior writer-in-the-making is obviously in thrall to her papa's fantastical visions and invented words; a bank nameplate showing that she took his Christian name Travers as her nom de plume registers with undemonstrative subtlety. All this generates a cumulative investment which not only pays off emotionally later on but is entirely appropriate, since the onrush of memories assailing seemingly buttoned-down Thompson, as she rolls her eyes at the studio's script ideas and gestating Sherman brothers songs, evidently comes as a surprise to her too.


Thompson's flair for tight-lipped comic underplaying renders the various 'making of' scenes in the script conference room a piquant delight (and they're not exaggerated either, as a marvellous bit of archive during the end credits makes clear), yet at the same time there's a tantalising delicacy about the way we gradually realise that she's hiding or suppressing something behind her hilariously strict resistance to mining the childlike mischief in the source material. She reserves just as much scorn for pretty much everything Disney, and if the film



The Banks job: Emma Thompson, Tom Hanks

doesn't quite convince us that there's the same deep-rooted psychological ferment behind the Mouse empire's marketing of cartoon-based fun and family values, it's no fault of Tom Hanks's affecting performance as Walt, only gradually revealing the interpretative insight and creative wellspring sheltered behind the wall of breezy mid-American bonhomie which sets oh-so-proper Thompson's twinset on edge.

From wistful past to fractious present, simmering inner realm to controlled outward appearance, the film sinuously proceeds without putting a foot wrong, it proves a landmark for director John Lee Hancock, who's previously shown a feel for easy-going sincerity redolent of unfussy Hollywood studio-era professionalism (*The Rookie*, *The Alamo*) but never displayed the elegance of craft on show here. Often

demonstrating an unfashionable willingness to see the good in people, Hancock came rather unstuck with *The Blind Side*, where the issues of class and race were simply too complex to be contained by the film's good nature, but here the balance he achieves between implicit childhood undertow and affectionately tart inside-Hollywood chronicle is strikingly effective. Crucially, the artful construction never veils the film's beating heart as it works towards an authentically moving conclusion, making clear the emotional price paid by the great creators, who, in reshaping their own fragmented hurts into the affirmative contours of timeless stories, offer us a valuable conduit to self-understanding. Even if it comes in the unlikely form of a flying nanny, a work-obsessed father and a song about kite-flying. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Alison Owen
Ian Collie

Philip Steuer

Written by

Kelly Marcel

Sue Smith

Director of

Photography

John Schwartzman

Film Editor

Mark Livolsi

Production Designer

Michael Corenblith

Music

Thomas Newman

Sound Mixer

John Pritchett

Costume Designer

Daniel Orlandi

©Disney

Enterprises, Inc.

Production

Companies

Walt Disney presents

a Ruby Films/

Essential Media

and Entertainment

production in

association with

BBC Films and

Hopscotch Features

A John Lee

Hancock film

Developed with the

assistance of Screen

Australia, BBC Films

Executive Producers

Paul Trijbits

Christine Langan

Andrew Mason

Troy Lum

Film Extracts

Mary Poppins (1964)

Tommie

Lily Bigham

Biddy

Maryborough, Australia, 1906. Bank employee Travers Goff prepares to move his family – including imaginative eldest daughter Helen – to a new remote rural posting.

London, 1961. Author P.L. Travers reluctantly agrees to visit Walt Disney in Hollywood for a script conference before deciding whether to sell him the rights to her novel *Mary Poppins*. Fearing that her work will be made childish and sentimental, the formidable 62-year-old refuses Disney's entreaties, and resists any proposed changes by screenwriter Don DaGradi and songwriters Richard and Robert Sherman. The experience prompts her to reflect on her childhood – she's the grown-up Helen. She recalls how her alcoholic father's fanciful storytelling enraptured her but made it difficult for him at work. Gradually, she senses a similar spirit of childlike fun in Disney's output. Her recollections make it clear that the character of *Mary Poppins* is based on her formidable Aunt Ellie. The writing team's realisation that, in the story, the magical nanny comes to save the flawed patriarch Mr Banks at last gets Travers on board. However, the discovery that Disney plans to use animation in the film sends her home in a huff. Disney determinedly follows, revealing how 'Mary Poppins' helped him come to terms with his disciplinarian father, and rightly surmising that Travers's unresolved feelings for her own father are why she guards the book so fiercely. He asks for her trust and she agrees. Later, she attends the film's Hollywood premiere.

Seduced and Abandoned Séduits et abandonnés

USA 2013
Director: James Toback
Certificate 15 98m 23s

Reviewed by Jonathan Romney

James Toback may not be prolific but he's heroic: he has contrived to make 11 features, starting with *Fingers* (1978), despite establishing himself as the model of the wayward, questionably bankable American auteur. His new documentary could be seen as either a magnificent gesture of defiance or as wilful career suicide, with Toback presenting himself as a quixotic touter of perverse projects. His proposed feature here is *Last Tango in Tikrit* – “a political romantic comedy set in the Middle East”, in which Alec Baldwin will play a character “close to myself” (as the actor gleefully claims) having sex with various women in a hotel room, possibly four at once.

Who knows whether Toback's *Tango* was ever more than a goofy hypothesis. But it works as a test case in his and Baldwin's exploration of the contemporary cinema business. Movies far more implausible get greenlit all the time, and in theory there's no reason why what seems an outré vanity project shouldn't get made.

In fact, the duo are playing disingenuous. They surely know that their film can never happen – not on their proposed \$15-20 million budget, and not with Neve Campbell as lead actress. She isn't a big enough name, so Toback and Baldwin must entertain advice about killing her character off and creating a role for a more marketable star like Jessica Chastain (you hope that Campbell is in on the joke, or at least very thick-skinned).

The bottom line of the movie money game is expounded by a parade of industry players. Some are rueful about a time when enthused individuals could take decisions on ambitious films, others cynically hardnosed about today's rule of the numbers. But cinema was ever heartless. As suggested by this film's title (shared with a 1964 Pietro Germi movie), the business uses up talents like disposable lovers, then tosses them aside. It's startling to be reminded what a Hollywood fall from grace can mean – most

poignantly in interviews with James Caan, a box-office titan in the 70s, now just another old guy whose phone doesn't ring like it used to.

Baldwin's own triumphant rebirth as a small-screen comic player in *30 Rock* has made him news again and got him on the cover of *Vanity Fair* – but celebrity is not the same as bankability, and he is not the marquee name he once was. Even so, the actor comes across as genially self-satirising, especially when griping about the drawbacks of his trade. Among other thespians commenting on their craft, the best value is Ryan Gosling, relishably dry on the grind of auditions: you spend the day debasing yourself, and then you get a parking ticket.

As for Cannes, there's much familiar anecdotal reminiscence from the great and the good. But interesting points are explored, notably the festival's singular status as an arena for cinema's highest and lowest values at once, as a venue that's both temple and trading floor.

Seduced and Abandoned is hardly *sui generis*. Scouring the Croisette from the salons of the Carlton to the Palais basement, it's bound to somewhat resemble every rubbernecking exposé of Cannes made by a jobbing TV crew. But Toback has remarkably good access to the names, and catches some of the most illustrious – perhaps most revealingly Martin Scorsese, who laments that the possibilities for the sort of films he can make are now dishearteningly limited.

You might expect cinephiles to stagger out of *Seduced and Abandoned* feeling suicidal, yet the film's breezy good humour offsets its glum findings and sometimes self-congratulatory tone. The result is surprisingly cathartic, as ageing men's professional kvetches can often be. Baldwin and Toback are entertaining company, and superb at encouraging their interviewees to let their hair down. Whether they get their *Tikrit* movie made is moot; the film they've actually completed is an infinitely more appealing option. **S**

Sunshine on Leith

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Dexter Fletcher
Certificate PG 99m 40s

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

When Charlie and Craig Reid made their US network premiere on David Letterman's *Late Show* in 1989, their host quipped that the brothers “look like every member of our writing staff”. True, they never did look the type to take centre stage, but their two-for-one singularity is all part of the draw of The Proclaimers, whose discography tenders a narrative to this Edinburgh-set musical.

Sadly, director Dexter Fletcher hasn't attempted to bottle the duo's essence – household to the Scots, accessibly other to the rest of the world – instead flattening most of what's distinct about them in making allowance for a mass market. Their music – roughshod, rousingly sentimental, music to take your shoes off to – is shined to a dull finish to serve a weak plot (homely shouldn't have to mean tabby-cat tame) about partners, old and young, falling out and making up.

The artificiality of song and dance is unkindly exaggerated by high-res photography, making a talented cast of actors appear too tightly tucked into their costumes. Each character has his or her hill to climb, but it's a struggle to empathise during cutaway montages when they're singing their feelings into ceiling corners. (Better the crowd ensemble!) George MacKay is excellent, however, and almost succeeds in raising the flash-mob finish to a level above high-end advertisement. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Andrew Macdonald Allon Reich Arabella Page Croft Kieran Parker Writer Stephen Greenhorn Based on his stageplay Director of Photography George Richmond Editor Stuart Gazzard Production Designer Mike Gunn Original Songs The Proclaimers Sound Recordist Alastair Mason Costume Designer Anna Robbins Choreographer Rosie Kay	Companies Entertainment Film Distributors present in association with BFI and Creative Scotland a DNA Films and Black Camel Picture Company production Executive Producers Nigel Green Trevor Green	Sara Vickers Eilidh Michael 'Cuban' Keat barman 'Wee' John Spence Brendan Paul McCole Ewan Dolby Digital In Colour Distributor Entertainment Film Distributors Ltd 8,970 ft +0 frames
Cast Peter Mullan Rab Jane Horrocks Jean George MacKay Davy Antonia Thomas Yvonne Freya Mavor Liz Kevin Guthrie Ally Jason Fleming Harry Paul Brannigan Ronnie	<p>©Entertainment Film Distributors Limited, DNA Films Limited and British Film Institute Production</p>	

Edinburgh, present day. Soldiers Ally and Davy return home after a tour of Afghanistan. Ally resumes his relationship with Davy's sister Liz, who introduces Davy to her English friend Yvonne. Ahead of his silver wedding anniversary, Davy's father Rab meets the daughter he's never known at the funeral of her mother, his mistress from 24 years ago. At the anniversary party, Ally proposes to Liz, but she turns him down, wanting to travel the world rather than settle down. Jean and Rab separate when she learns of his affair, but reconcile after Rab suffers a heart attack. Liz takes a job in Miami and Ally rejoins the army. When Yvonne and Davy argue about his commitment, Yvonne packs for England. They make up at the train station.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Michael Mailer Alec Baldwin James Toback Written by James Toback Director of Photography Ruben Sluijter Editor Aaron Yanes Sound Mixers French Crew: Philippe Goubert NY Crew: Micah Blomberg Alan Kudan California Crew: Kevin Pate John Bartle	Picture presents a James Toback film A Michael Mailer Films production Executive Producers Morris Levy Alan Helene Larry Herbert Neal Schneider Film Extracts <i>Working Girl</i> (1988) <i>The Aviator</i> (2004) <i>Harvard Man</i> (2001) <i>State and Main</i> (2000) <i>Ultimo tango a Parigi/Last Tango in Paris</i> (1972) <i>When Will I Be Loved</i> (2003) <i>Prima della rivoluzione/Before the Revolution</i> (1964) <i>Mean Streets</i> (1973) <i>Novecento/1900</i> (1976) <i>Taxi Driver</i> (1976)	<i>You're a Big Boy Now</i> (1966) <i>3 Women</i> (1977) <i>Repulsion</i> (1965) <i>The Hunt for Red October</i> (1990) <i>The Godfather</i> (1972) <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (1979) <i>Who's That Knocking at My Door</i> (1968) <i>The Searchers</i> (1956) <i>Nóz w wodzie/Knife in the Water</i> (1962) <i>Rosemary's Baby</i> (1968) <i>Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest</i> (2006) <i>The Rum Diary</i> (2010) <i>The Libertine</i> (2005) <i>The Artist</i> (2011) <i>OSS 117: Le Caire, nid d'espions/OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies</i> (2006) <i>Crazy, Stupid, Love</i> (2011)
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Writer-director James Toback and actor Alec Baldwin visit the 2012 Cannes Film Festival to pitch their new feature project, to star Baldwin and Neve Campbell. They interview actors, critics and filmmakers and meet sales agents, producers and financiers, who

The Help (2011)
The Gambler (1974)
IngLOURious Basterds (2009)
Wicker Park (2004)
The Tree of Life (2010)
Troy (2004)
Mr. Nobody (2009)
Take Shelter (2011)
Blue Valentine (2010)
GoodFellas (1990)
Juno (2007)
Jennifer's Body (2009)
Young Adult (2011)
Chinatown (1974)
La Dolce Vita (1960)
A Place in the Sun (1951)
A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)
Raging Bull (1980)
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
Il conformista/The

Conformist (1970)
The Shining (1980)
Le Pianiste/The Pianist (2002)
Twixt (2011)

With
Bérénice Bejo
Bernardo Bertolucci
James Caan
Jessica Chastain
Diablo Cody
Francis Ford Coppola
Ryan Gosling
Jeffrey Katzenberg
Diane Kruger
Mike Medavoy
Ron Meyer
Roman Polanski
Martin Scorsese
Taki
Theodoracopulos
Alec Baldwin
Scott Foundas
Neve Campbell
Malya Zaim

Thierry Fremaux
Todd McCarthy
Michel Ciment
Roman Polanski
Mark Damon
Avi Lerner
Thorsten Schumaker
Ashok Amritraj
Jeremy Thomas
Jean 'Johnny' Pigozzi
Brett Ratner
Arpad 'Arki' Busson
Ben Schneider
Denise Rich
Graydon Carter
Larry Herbert
Alan Helene
Neal Schneider

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Soda Pictures

8,854 ft +8 frames

tell them of the compromises they'll need to make in order to secure backing for their project. Toback and Baldwin voice their own jaundiced views on the pleasures and pains of filmmaking.

Utopia

United Kingdom/Australia 2013
Directors: John Pilger, Alan Lowery

Reviewed by Sophie Mayer

"The Lucky Country. Lucky for who? We're refugees in our own country." It's impossible to disagree with the assessment. Nold, a Nyungar elder, is standing in the brightly coloured family bedroom at a hotel and luxury spa – called, unbelievably, Karma – on Rottnest Island, formerly a prison for Aboriginal men and boys. His calm narration of events at Rottnest makes the disjunction all the more sickening.

John Pilger's latest documentary repeatedly examines the disjuncture between the utopian fantasy of white Australia and the dystopia on which it is built – and which it continues to mine for profit at the expense of its indigenous inhabitants. Pilger has been documenting Aboriginal communities since his first encounter with a government reserve at Jay Creek in 1966, and his commitment remains undimmed. It's incredible, given his deserved reputation for asking hard questions (using appropriate words such as 'apartheid' and 'genocide'), that political figures, including former prime minister Kevin Rudd, agreed to be interviewed for this documentary. Labour politicians at least have the decency to appear contrite, even while spouting doublespeak. But Mal Brough, architect of the 2007 intervention – which introduced changes to law enforcement, welfare and so on in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities in response to still unproven allegations of child abuse, and which was heavily criticised by a UN rapporteur – is unrepentant.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

John Pilger

Written by

John Pilger

Director of

Photography

Preston Clothier

Edited by

Joe Frost

Sound Recordists

Robert Pover

Tim Parrats

James Nowiczewski

@Secret Country

Films

Production

Companies

Dartmouth Films

presents

Produced in

association with

SBS-TV Australia

A Dartmouth Films

production

Executive

Producers

Christopher Hird

presented by

John Pilger

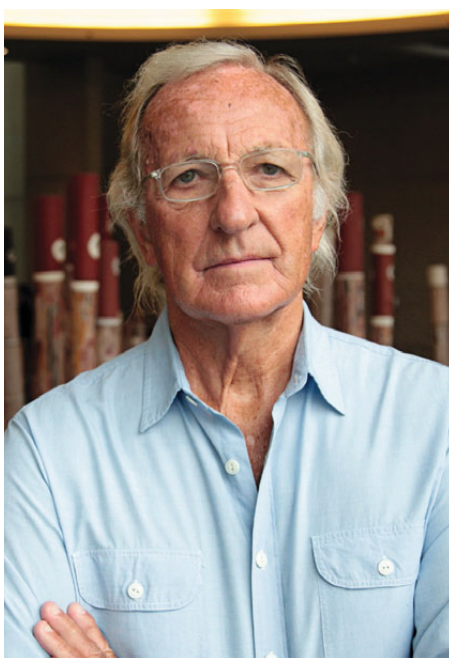
In Colour

[L78:1]

Distributor

Dartmouth Films

Sydney, Australia. John Pilger investigates holiday homes at Palm Beach, situated on land taken from the first Australians. He contrasts this luxury with life in Ampilatwatja in the Northern Territory, where tin shacks, known as 'humpies', lack basic sanitation. The documentary then explores how settler propaganda (including a song designating Canberra "a city of white", Australia Day events and the 1990s 'history wars') and a lack of political will continue to create and uphold systemic racism. Deaths in police custody, forced removal of children, lack of funding for infrastructure, healthcare and education and transgenerational deprivation are documented. The film examines the history of resistance, from individual campaigns such as that of Arthur and Leila Murray, seeking justice for the death in custody of their son, to the Gurindji strike and land-claims protests. The military intervention declared by Prime Minister John Howard in 2007, predicated on an extensively disproven ABC report about paedophile rings, is revealed as a grab for mineral-rich land. Despite a 2008 apology from Howard's successor Kevin Rudd, the film concludes that little has changed in attitudes towards, and treatment of, the Aboriginal population since the establishment of Australia as a penal colony.



Campaign trail: John Pilger

The focus here is not, however, on white people: apart from a few journalists and doctors working as allies, whites are only admitted on camera to be interrogated about their awareness of first Australians. Instead, the film focuses in image and sound on the Aboriginal communities themselves: Utopia, in the centre of Australia; Ampilatwatja in the Northern Territory; and the Mutitjulu community at the eastern end of Uluru (Ayers Rock), which was subjected to the intervention. As Pilger points out, accusations of paedophile rings in Mutitjulu (made anonymously on ABC's *Lateline* by a politician who had never been to the area) were conceived to draw attention away both from a planned land grab in the area, and from evidence of rampant sexual abuse by whites at residential schools. Bob Randall, a Mutitjulu elder, tells the community's story on screen and in his anthem for the Stolen Generations, 'My Brown Skin Baby', which appears on the soundtrack alongside traditional Aboriginal music.

Pilger is as compelled to present the unbroken history of Aboriginal presence and resistance as to unfold the often obfuscated history of state maltreatment, from imprisonment through the Stolen Generations to the current situation. He doesn't stint on the shocking facts and images of incarceration, disease, malnutrition and neglect, but the film is never a victimology. Attentive to the dignity, diversity and resilience of its Aboriginal participants, it offers a model for future relations far better than the vague solutions Pilger portentously delivers to camera at the end. Despite scrappy organisation, the film's rage and righteousness carry through, thanks to Aboriginal speakers like Randall, Nold, civil servant Tjanara Goreng Goreng, actor and campaigner Patricia Morton-Thomas, campaigner Arthur Murray, elder Rosalie Kunoth-Monks and journalist Amy McQuire (a researcher on the film), determined to make their land more than a prison.

uwantme2killhim?

United Kingdom/USA 2011
Director: Andrew Douglas
Certificate 15 91m 44s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

As social media continues to evolve, so too does its capacity for anonymous manipulation and subterfuge, from benign celebrity identity theft – a counterfeit Michael Haneke tweeting about his flatulent cat – to the murky business of cyber-stalking and faceless bullying. In dramatising an outlandish true crime, *uwantme2killhim?* looks back to the relatively quaint instant-messaging applications and chatrooms of ten years ago, nascent social networks that nonetheless offer ample opportunity for deception. If the adage of truth being stranger than fiction applies here – a wholly imagined script along these lines would likely be dismissed as hokum – then the irony is that this is a very real story dominated by a byzantine fiction. It's also a gift for a shrewd screenwriter: in theory the wool can be pulled over the eyes of the story's suggestible character and those of the audience simultaneously.

The film is drawn from Judy Bachrach's *Vanity Fair* article of the same name, already the source of a Channel 4 documentary (*Kill Me If You Can*) and, most unexpectedly, a Nico Muhly opera (*Two Boys*). Relocating events from Manchester to London, Mike Walden's script omits some of the more outrageous details described by Bachrach but otherwise asks the same question: what led a teenager to stab his school friend, adamant he was acting on behalf of MI5? Mark (Jamie Blackley) is popular and athletic but also a wayward dreamer, desperate for some authentic excitement to pierce the wan suburbs. A lustful online liaison with fellow chatroom user Rachel (Jaime Winstone) may provide the answer, although Rachel claims they can't meet in the flesh because she is in the witness protection programme – the first inkling that something is amiss. Infatuated, Mark agrees to protect Rachel's timid brother John (Toby Regbo) from school bullies. The two become fast if unlikely friends – until Mark's chatroom sessions take a sinister turn.

Any film that deals with the mechanical call and response of virtual chat faces a stumbling block: how to visualise it compellingly? Nakata Hideo's *Chatroom* (2010) eschewed keyboards and monitors for a Murakami-esque labyrinth of imaginary spaces, while Atom Egoyan's *Adoration* (2008) featured an advanced play on Skype, with split-screen mosaics of webcam babblers shouting each other down. Here, director Andrew Douglas, who made the evocative Americana doc *Searching*



Inconvenienced: Jamie Blackley

for the *Wrong-Eyed Jesus* and a middling *Amityville Horror* remake, takes the bold decision to have his characters speak aloud their messages as they're typed. It's a gambit that sadly backfires; these scenes look bizarrely stilted when contrasted with the naturalistic depiction of the boys' tentative, ultimately tragic alliance. Walden's writing displays structural nous, but when it comes to character motivation things remain sketchy. In Bachrach's retelling, Mark comes across as a genuine dimwit – it's plausible that he'd be hoodwinked. Here, he's more starry-eyed and lacking direction, his desire to become involved in some kind of grand narrative being sated by the elaborate ruse that snares him. Parental neglect and the appeal of violent fantasies are hinted at as other potential catalysts. Even so, it's hard to believe that Mark would be led up the garden path so easily. An astounding story, awkwardly executed. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Bryan Singer Steve Golin Peter Heslop Simon Crocker Jason Taylor	Written by Mike Walden Based on the article by Judy Bacharach originally published in Vanity Fair	Director of Photography Tim Wooster	Editor Michael Elliot	Production Designer Paul Cripps	Music by/Music Performed by Jon Hopkins	Production Sound Mixer John Midgley	Costume Designer Caroline Harris
Alliance Films and Bad Hat Harry present in association with Aegis Film Fund a film by Andrew Douglas	An Anonymous Content, Bad Hat Harry, Jumping Jack Films production A U Want Films	Limited production Independent	Executive Producers Andrew Douglas Paul Green Marc Berliner Xavier Marchand Robert Walak Harvey Weinstein Bob Weinstein Lenny Beckerman Tim Smith Anne Sheehan	Cast Jamie Blackley Mark Toby Regbo			
John Joanne Froggatt Detective Inspector Sarah Clayton Liz White Janet Dickinson Jaime Winstone Rachel Mark Womack Mark's dad Louise Delamere Mark's mum Amy Wren Zoey James Burrows Ryan Robbins Stephanie Leonidas Kelly	In Colour [2.35:1]	Distributor El Films	8,256ft +0 frames				
©8383 Productions LLC Production Companies Magnet Releasing & The Collective in association with Bloody Disgusting presents a Magnet release Executive Producers Simon Barrett Adam Wingard Zak Zeman Tom Owen	Production Designer Thomas S. Hammock	Production Sound Mixer Canaan Triplett	Visual Effects SnootFX	Production Designer Thomas S. Hammock	Music Steve Moore	Costume Designer Autumn Steed	Production Sound Mixer Canaan Triplett
Visual Effects SnootFX	Production Company A Snoot Entertainment production	Cast Lawrence Michael Levine Larry Kelsy Abbott Ayesha L.C. Holt Kyle Simon Barrett Steve	Phase 1 Clinical Trials Director Adam Wingard Producer Chris Harding Written by Simon Barrett Director of Photography Tarin Anderson Edited by Adam Wingard David Geis	Production Designer Thomas S. Hammock	Music Steve Moore	Costume Designer Autumn Steed	Production Sound Mixer Canaan Triplett
Visual Effects SnootFX	Production Company A Snoot Entertainment production	Cast Adam Wingard Herman Hannah Hughes Clarissa John T. Woods Dr Fleischer	A Ride in the Park Directors Eduardo Sanchez Gregg Hale Producers Kyle D. Crosby Jamie Nash Screenplay Jamie Nash Director of Photography Seamus Tierney Edited by Adam Wingard	Editors Eduardo Sanchez Bob Rose	Music James Guymon	Costume Designer Avon Dorsey	Sound Mixers Matthew Engel Levi Magyar
Production Company A Haxan Films production	Executive Producers Robin Cowie Andy Jenkins	Cast Jay Saunders biker Bette Cassat screaming girl Dave Coyne good Samaritan guy Wendy Donigan good Samaritan girl	Safe Haven Directors Timo Tjahjanto Gareth Huw Evans Producer Kimo Stamboel Written by Timo Tjahjanto Gareth Huw Evans	Director of Photography Abdul Dermawan Habir	Edited by Gareth Huw Evans	Sound & Music Fajar Yuskernal Aria Prayogi	Executive Producer Rangga Maya Barack-Evans
Cast Fachry Albar Adam Hannah Al-Rashid Lena Oka Antara Malik Andrew Lincoln Suleiman Joni	Slumber Party Alien Invasion Director Jason Eisener Producer Robert Cotterill Written by Jason Eisener John Davies Director of Photography Jeff Wheaton Editor	Jason Eisener Sound Recorder Adam Burke	Production Company A Yer Dead production	Cast Riley Eisener Tank Ryan Logan Gary Samantha Gracie Jen Cohen King Randy	Dolby Digital In Colour [1.78:1]	Distributor Jade Films	8,263 ft +8 frames

London, 2003. Mark, a popular but aimless teenager, develops an online infatuation with Rachel, whom he's met in an internet chatroom. Rachel reciprocates Mark's love, but warns that they cannot meet in person because she is in the witness protection programme; she also fears the wrath of her abusive boyfriend Kevin. Rachel asks Mark to protect her brother John, a loner in Mark's year at school who is being bullied. Mark complies, and he and John become unlikely friends. Trying to contact Rachel again, Mark is threatened by Kevin. John tells Mark that Rachel has died in an apparent suicide, and convinces him that Kevin murdered her. Mark stalks the block of flats where Kevin apparently lives but finds no trace of him. Mark is contacted in the chatroom by Janet, a woman claiming to be an MI5 agent. Janet explains that MI5 suspect John's stepfather of terrorist activities and that John – apparently terminally ill with a brain tumour – is likely to be coaxed into committing an atrocity at school. Janet requests that Mark kill John on behalf of MI5, promising him prestige, riches and sexual favours on fulfilment of the mission. Mark stabs John and is arrested; John narrowly survives. Police deduce that John invented all the chatroom personas and solicited his own murder. The court orders the boys to have no further contact.

V/H/S/2

USA/Canada 2013
Directors: various
Certificate 18 91m 49s



Petrified forest: *A Ride in the Park*

Reviewed by Kim Newman

V/H/S, a 2012 anthology of 'found footage' mini-horrors, seems likely to become a franchise, because a generation of genre directors not yet labelled as a movement ('mumblecore' has been suggested) need a forum.

With episodes from Adam Wingard (*You're Next*), Eduardo Sanchez (of 'found footage' touchstone *The Blair Witch Project*) and Gregg Hale, Gareth Evans (*The Raid*) and Timo Tjahjanto (*Macabre*) and Jason Eisener (*Hobo with a Shotgun*), *V/H/S 2* is more consistent than *V/H/S* but suffers from sameyness. All four stories involve fixing cameras to people who go into situations that rapidly devolve into chaos and carnage.

Without the token character/dialogue-based horrors of *V/H/S*, this feels more repetitive, even though it's leaner, with fewer longueurs and Simon Barrett's frame story is stronger.

As standalones, these stories would play better than they do in a collection – which, despite the variety of menaces on offer from supernatural to science fictional, presents four different slides into screaming anarchy. After the mix of *The Eye* and *From Beyond* in Wingard's episode, there's little characterisation or plot, so it's all on the level of watching fireworks – although, especially in the case of Evans and Tjahjanto's exciting apocalypse, that's diverting enough. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Gary Binkow Brad Miska Roxanne Benjamin Anthology Concept by Brad Miska	Production Designer Thomas S. Hammock Production Sound Mixer Canaan Triplett Visual Effects SnootFX	Production Designer Thomas S. Hammock Music Steve Moore Costume Designer Autumn Steed Production Sound Mixer Canaan Triplett Visual Effects SnootFX	Editors Eduardo Sanchez Bob Rose Music James Guymon Costume Designer Avon Dorsey Sound Mixers Matthew Engel Levi Magyar	Director of Photography Abdul Dermawan Habir Edited by Gareth Huw Evans Sound & Music Fajar Yuskernal Aria Prayogi	Jason Eisener Sound Recorder Adam Burke
©8383 Productions LLC Production Companies Magnet Releasing & The Collective in association with Bloody Disgusting presents a Magnet release Executive Producers Simon Barrett Adam Wingard Zak Zeman Tom Owen	Production Company A Snoot Entertainment production Cast Lawrence Michael Levine Larry Kelsy Abbott Ayesha L.C. Holt Kyle Simon Barrett Steve	Production Company A Snoot Entertainment production Cast Adam Wingard Herman Hannah Hughes Clarissa John T. Woods Dr Fleischer	Production Company A Haxan Films production Executive Producers Robin Cowie Andy Jenkins Cast Jay Saunders biker Bette Cassat screaming girl Dave Coyne good Samaritan guy Wendy Donigian good Samaritan girl	Executive Producer Rangga Maya Barack-Evans Cast Fachry Albar Adam Hannah Al-Rashid Lena Oka Antara Malik Andrew Lincoln Suleiman Joni	A Yer Dead production Cast Riley Eisener Tank Ryan Logan Gary Samantha Gracie Jen Cohen King Randy
Tapé 49 Director Simon Barrett Producer Chris Harding Written by Simon Barrett Director of Photography Tarin Anderson Edited by Adam Wingard David Geis	Phase 1 Clinical Trials Director Adam Wingard Producer Chris Harding Written by Simon Barrett Director of Photography Seamus Tierney Edited by Adam Wingard	A Ride in the Park Directors Eduardo Sanchez Gregg Hale Producers Kyle D. Crosby Jamie Nash Screenplay Jamie Nash Director of Photography Stephen Scott	Safe Haven Directors Timo Tjahjanto Gareth Huw Evans Producer Kimo Stambøel Written by Timo Tjahjanto Gareth Huw Evans	Slumber Party Alien Invasion Director Jason Eisener Producer Robert Cotterill Written by Jason Eisener John Davies Director of Photography Jeff Wheaton Editor	Dolby Digital In Colour [1.78:1] Distributor Jade Films 8,263 ft +8 frames

iVivan las antípodas!

Germany/The Netherlands/Argentina/Chile/Japan/Russia/Finland 2011
Director: Victor Kossakovsky
Certificate U 108m 16s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

iVivan las Antípodas! kicks off with an onscreen quote from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where the heroine, tumbling down the rabbit hole, considers the possibility of falling right through the earth and coming out "among the people that walk with their heads downwards. The Antipathies, I think..." It's a quiet hint from Russian documentarist Victor Kossakovsky that his film won't be above (or indeed below) the occasional touch of sly humour.

Kossakovsky chooses four pairs of locations that are each other's antipodes, diametrically opposite on the earth's surface: Shanghai and a small riverine settlement in Argentina; Lake Baikal in Siberia and Chilean Patagonia; the volcanic Big Island of Hawaii and a village in Botswana; Miraflores de la Sierra, just north of Madrid, and Castlepoint on the coast of New Zealand's North Island. Some he chooses for contrast (the frenetic bustle of Shanghai against the rural lassitude of Argentina), others to point up their similarities (humans living their lives alongside animals, both domestic and wild, in Siberia and Patagonia). All this is conveyed in visual terms: we hear the occasional snatch of conversation but there's no voiceover commentary.

How far we get to know the people portrayed varies considerably from place to place. In Shanghai it's an unceasing stream of anonymous humanity, pouring off ferries and crowding the smog-filled streets on bikes and scooters among a mass of new buildings being erected and countless others being torn down (though even in the half-demolished buildings life goes on – in one we glimpse a woman cooking, in another a man vigorously brushing his teeth). There are quirky details: a man chugs along on his scooter with what looks like half a dozen pig carcasses slung over it. But in Entre Ríos, Argentina, we meet the Perez brothers, who chat desultorily while tending their rickety pontoon bridge across a small river, greeting the passing drivers and occasionally remembering to extract the two pesos toll charge. ("Did he pay in advance?" they ask each other as a truck barrels past.)


Elsewhere the film dwells on passing fragments of life – or death. In Hawaii a man searches for his lost dog; in New Zealand a whale, washed up on the beach, dies and is dismembered with chainsaws. In Russia we overhear a conversation between two women (possibly mother and daughter), the younger one saying that she'd like to be reincarnated as water. A Botswanan woman points out elephants and lions to her infant daughter; a Patagonian farmer greets all his sheep by name and is accompanied by a whole flock of cats as he goes. At one point the camera, seemingly entranced, follows the flight of a buzzard as it soars and swoops to the accompaniment of Alexander Popov's dramatically percussive score.

Kossakovsky enjoys visual puns. A Spanish rock formation echoes the shape of the beached whale, long sausages cooling on a line mimic washing hung out to dry, and he cuts from the grey convolutions of solidified lava on Hawaii to what proves to be a close-up of the hide of a Botswanan elephant. He likes to play games



Opposites attract: *iVivan las Antípodas!*

with his camera too, tilting it over on its side or turning it upside down. More than once we're shown mountains reflected in a lake, only to realise, from a slight ripple in the 'sky', that the reflection is uppermost. At other times we're given a horizontally split screen, with landscapes from two different places mirroring each other, then gradually rotating, upper becoming lower – an antipodes in miniature.

Now and then the director shows his hand a little too openly, as when he has the Perez brothers, watching the sunset, muse, "How mysterious – there's another world down there. The world spins but they're always below us... It's China's turn to run the planet." The nudge really isn't needed; the film's gentle, visually beguiling concept comes across just fine without it. 

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Heino Deckert
Cameraman
Victor Kossakovsky
Editor
Victor Kossakovsky
Composer
Alexander Popov
Sound Recordist
Guido Berenblum

@ma.ja.de
Filmproduktion,
Lemming Film, Gema
Films, Producciones
Aplaplac
Production Companies
Heino Deckert
and ma.ja.de
Filmproduktion in
co-production with
Lemming Film, Gema
Films, Producciones
Aplaplac, NHK, ZDF/
Arte, WDR, VPRO
In co-operation
with Film House
Germany AG

In association
with CTC Network,
YLE TV2
Supported by
Mitteldeutsche
Medienförderung,
Medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg,
Niederlands
Filmfonds,
INCAA, Corfo
A film by Victor
Kossakovsky
A co-production
of VPRO, WDR,
ZDF/Arte, NHK,
Producciones
Aplaplac, Gema
Films, Lemming
Film, ma.ja.de
Filmproduktion
GmbH
Developed with
the support of Jan
Vrijman Fund, Corfo,
Mitteldeutsche
Medienförderung
Produced with
the support of

INCAA, Nederlands
Filmfonds,
Medienboard
Berlin-Brandenburg,
Deutscher
Filmförderfonds,
Eurimages,
Mitteldeutsche
Medienförderung
Executive Producers
Achim Pfeffer
Christian
Angermayer
Eva-Maria Weerts
Gema Juarez Allen
Alexander
Rodnyansky

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Part-subtitled

Distributor
Filmhouse

9,744 ft +0 frames

A documentary about antipodes – places that are diametrically opposite each other on the globe. An onscreen prologue explains that, since most of the earth is covered by water, exact antipodes on inhabited dry land are quite rare. Documentarist Victor Kossakovsky has selected four pairs of them: Shanghai in China and Entre Ríos in Argentina; Lake Baikal in Russia and Patagonia in Chile; Big Island, Hawaii, and Kubu in Botswana; Miraflores in Spain and Castlepoint in New Zealand. He presents images from each, often concentrating as much on the animal life and the configurations of the landscape as on the human beings who live there.


Who Needs Enemies

United Kingdom 2013
Director: Peter Stylianou
Certificate 18 91m 6s

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Fans of the BBC's *The Fast Show* may remember fondly a 2000 Christmas special sketch entitled 'It's a Right Royal Cockney Barrel of Monkeys'. A spoof trailer for a Guy Ritchie-esque gangster movie, it mercilessly skewered the benighted subgenre's blend of cocky-but-witless banter, glamorised violence, rank misogyny and unearned self-mythologising. To this day I like to imagine that the sketch spoke loudly enough to Ritchie to persuade him to decamp to a remote island for 2002's *Swept Away*.

As the opening moments of Peter Stylianou's low-budget suburban gangster gadabout *Who Needs Enemies* groan into view, one can't help but think of that sketch, and how badly the writer-director needs to catch it. As a trio of violent, coked-up lager louts trade 'fahks' and 'cahnts' with abandon, it's easy to fear the worst, and such loathsome behaviour is indeed sprinkled liberally throughout the ensuing narrative. But, a few convoluted plot turns later, it becomes clear that Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* – that other 90s harbinger of drab facsimiles – is at least as much of an influence as Ritchie's early films. The novelistic, chronologically manipulated approach is certainly a bold move on Stylianou's part, and leads to a couple of neat narrative surprises. However, it ultimately serves to confuse, and achieves little that regular old parallel editing couldn't have.

Who Needs Enemies broaches a host of difficult themes – child abuse, rape, domestic violence – but more often than not ends up simply displaying aberrant behaviour rather than challenging it. Such material needn't necessarily remain taboo but it should certainly be dealt with delicately; Paul Andrew Williams's *London to Brighton* (2006) is 



Cutting edge: Kris Johnson

➔ a good example of a low-budget British crime film that sensitively tackles the issue of child sex abuse. Crucially, that film was genuinely interested in its victims. Stylianou by contrast has little time for the sufferers of these heinous crimes, preferring instead to burnish the egos of the violent men who act as their saviours – an approach that reaches its nadir in a comical Christ analogy towards the film's end. Another example comes when a character discovers photographs of child abuse and remembers he's got a kid he hasn't been looking after properly. The film clearly intends this as some kind of road-to-Damascus moment but we're left wondering, did it really take *that* to make him realise? The film's battered, tortured women, of course, have no voice at all. The filmmakers may argue this merely reflects the seedy milieu depicted, but the suggestion that only men can save the day leaves a bitter taste in the mouth. It might take a rewatch of 'It's a Right Royal Cockney Barrel of Monkeys' to wash it out. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tony Currier
Written by
Peter Stylianou
Director of Photography
Andre Govia
Editor
Peter Stylianou
Original Music
Christopher Blake
William Dorey
Sound Recordists
Pietro Giordano
Mark Andrews

©Red Guerilla Films
Production Company
Red Guerilla
Films presents
Executive Producers
Nik Stylianou
Tony Currier

Cast
Michael McKell
Ian Levine
Ian Pirie
Tom Sheridan
Emma Barton
Catherine, 'Cat'
Tom Carey
Tony
Glen Fox
Mark
Kris Johnson
Chris
Victoria Donovan
Vicky Levine
Lincoln Samuel
Bash
Nick Lavelle
Olav
Donna Preston
Betty
Daniel Pirie
Adam Sheridan
Louis McKell
John Levine

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Distributor
Ballpark Film
Distributors
8,199 ft +0 frames

A London suburb, present day. (The film depicts the following events in eight chronologically reordered chapters.) Gangster Tom rents out his strip club to his friend Ian who, unbeknown to Tom, is using the venue to host a paedophile party. Barred from his own club, Tom sends a photographer to capture evidence. Tom threatens to send the images to Ian's wife Vicky if Ian doesn't tell him where the children came from. Ian gives up the information, so Tom and a henchman murder the sex-trafficking Hungarian husband-and-wife team responsible. Ian dispatches Chris and Tony (who brings along his friend Mark) to kill Tom at his house and retrieve the photographs. Chris believes that he has killed Tom but Tom survives, and Tony secretly tells him to play dead in order to save his life. Mark finds the incriminating envelope and a stash of cash. Horrified at the contents of the envelope, he suggests they betray Ian and retain the money. Chris, who is loyal to Ian, strangles Mark and disposes of the body in Tony's shed. Chris then attacks Tony and rapes his girlfriend Cat. Tony shoots Chris. Ian retrieves the cash and the pictures but not the SD card on which the evidence is stored. The card has been taken by Tom's colleague Bash, who had earlier disposed of the bodies at Tony's house. Vicky receives a letter with the photographs and confronts Ian. Tony, Bash and Tom drive Ian to a remote location. Tom kills Ian.

Wolf Children

Director: Hosoda Mamoru
Certificate PG 117m 9s



What big eyes you have: *Wolf Children*

Reviewed by Andrew Osmond

Japanese animated fantasy *Wolf Children* comes to Britain weeks after Miyazaki Hayao (*Spirited Away*) announced his retirement from filmmaking. On the evidence of this film (bolstered by two excellent previous features, *The Girl Who Leapt Through Time* and *Summer Wars*), director Hosoda Mamoru has the best claim to be Miyazaki's creative successor.

In *Wolf Children*, a heroic mother must find a way to raise her unique children, who can become wolves at will. The film starts with a Tokyo college student, Hana, noticing a stranger in one of her lectures. The two become friends, then closer, and when, on a starry winter night, the youth reveals himself to be a wolfman, the girl reacts with wonder. The couple's relationship plays out in delicate, dialogue-free montages, like a less winsome version of the overture to Pixar's *Up* (2009), and with an equally heartbreaking payoff.

The main story takes place in remote mountains, where Hana subsequently goes to raise her children. There's plenty of comedy, including a wonderfully simple cartoon moment when little Yuki repeatedly demands food, growing wolf ears and a doggy nose as her voice rises. Pity the parent of a shape-changing toddler who gnaws tables and chews cushions.

Other parts of the film, such as the scenes of Hana trying to build a life in Japan's hilly countryside, may play less well to British audiences. The heart of the story is Hana's fortitude through adversity, and how she must adapt through no fault of her own. Viewers expecting Pixar-style comedy may be bored. But the appeal of Japanese animation to many foreigners is precisely such differences in approach, especially when they transform the familiar. For example, a curmudgeonly farmer character who helps Hana (voiced in Japanese by former gangster actor Bunta Sugawara) looks like late-period Clint Eastwood, and Hosoda acknowledges that he had Eastwood in mind.

The unshaded character designs have a naive appearance, even by the standards of drawn animations. As in Studio Ghibli films, the quasi-real background detail is fascinating – the country setting is based on Hosoda's own childhood home. Viewers may quibble with the characters' destinies but the resolution is both tearjerking and cathartic. Thoroughly delightful, *Wolf Children* shames most contemporary Hollywood animations with its sweep and originality.

The film will be released in cinemas in dubbed and subtitled versions. This review is based on the subtitled Japanese version. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Watanabe Takafumi
Ito Takuya
Saito Yuichiro
Screenplay
Hosoda Mamoru
Okudera Satoko
Editor
Nishiya Shigeru
Art Director

Ohno Hiroshi
Music
Masakatsu Takagi
Animation Director
Yamashita Takaaki
Production Companies
Studio Chizu
Madhouse Studios

Executive Producer
Okuda Seiji

Voice Cast
Colleen
Clinkenbeard
Hana
David Matranga
Ookami, Wolf Man

Alison Viktorin
young Ame
Jad Saxton
Yuki
Jason Liebrecht
Souhei
Lara Woodhull
young Yuki
Micah Solusod
Ame

Jerry Russell
Grandpa Nira
Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
UK release to include
subtitled and English-
dubbed versions
Distributor

Manga Entertainment
10,543 ft +8 frames
Japanese
theatrical title
Okami kodomo
no ame to yuki

Tokyo, the present. College student Hana befriends a solitary youth at one of her lectures. They become close, and the youth reveals his secret – he has both human and wolf blood and can become a wolf at will.

In time they have two children – a boisterous girl named Yuki and her withdrawn brother Ame. The man disappears. Hana is devastated to find his wolf body in a canal; he has been killed while foraging for his family. Hana strives to raise her children, who have inherited the power to transform. They move to a remote house on a mountain, where Hana tries to grow crops; at first she finds it impossible but she is helped by a grumpy elderly farmer. Yuki goes to school and changes her feral behaviour, striving to fit in with her classmates.

Feeling threatened by a boy, however, she turns momentarily wolfish and injures him, but later they become friends. Ame, meanwhile, is increasingly fascinated by the wild country, which he explores with an aged fox he calls Teacher. Ame believes he will be Teacher's successor, a caretaker of the forest.

During a storm, Yuki and her boyfriend are stranded at their school. Yuki confesses her nature to him. The boy tells her that he's always known what she is and will protect her secret. Ame leaves home for the mountain. Afraid for him, Hana follows but is injured in a fall. Ame carries her to safety and then departs in wolf form, howling his farewell. Tearfully, Hana accepts her son's choice. Yuki leaves home and begins an independent life as a human.

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Home cinema



A gift for beatific suffering: Ingrid Bergman in *Stromboli*, the first of her collaborations with Roberto Rossellini

FROM PLASTER SAINT TO PILGRIM

In 1947 Ingrid Bergman wrote a letter to Roberto Rossellini – and one of cinema's great partnerships was born

3 FILMS BY ROBERTO ROSSELLINI STARRING INGRID BERGMAN

STROMBOLI/EUROPE '51/JOURNEY TO ITALY

Italy/USA; 1950/52/54; Criterion Collection/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 106/109/85 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: English and Italian-language versions with Rossellini introductions, 'Rossellini Under the Volcano', 'Rossellini Through His Own Eyes', visual essay 'Surprised by Death' by James Quandt, interview with film historian Elena Dagrada, interviews with critic Adriano Aprà, interview with Rossellini's niece G. Fiorella Mariani, Ingrid Rossellini and Isabella Rossellini, commentary by Laura Mulvey, interview with Martin Scorsese, visual essay 'Living and Departed' by Tag Gallagher, 'Ingrid Bergman Remembered', on-set footage, Guy Madden's 'My Dad Is 100 Years Old', Bergman home movies, short film 'The Chicken'

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Roberto Rossellini's *Europe '51*, the second of five features that he made starring his then wife Ingrid Bergman, ends with the actress looking out

from the barred window of an asylum, radiant with pathos. She is playing Irene, a socialite living in Rome who suffers a mental breakdown when her adolescent son dies of very possibly self-inflicted wounds. Inconsolable, blaming his death on her own negligence, Irene finds solace in ministering to the mendicants and untended urchins of the city's dingy suburbs. This total breach of social decorum attracts the attention of Irene's family, and eventually the authorities, and together they conspire to have her put away. Irene's new selflessness is duly diagnosed as a species of insanity. As her family bid her goodbye, a group of the peasants whose lives she has touched gather outside the institution, their voices rising in proclamation: "She's a saint!"

Bergman had a gift for beautiful, beatific suffering, and her campaign for canonisation had begun well before she left Hollywood for the Holy City. She'd played a nun for Leo McCarey in *The Bells of St Mary's* (1945); susceptible to the lure of retreat from the stagnant intellectual atmosphere of the movie colony, she'd fled to Broadway in 1946 to appear in Maxwell Anderson's play *Joan of Lorraine*; and before her extended leave of absence with Rossellini she played the Maid of Orleans again, for the 1948 Victor Fleming mega-

production *Joan of Arc*. According to Fleming biographer Victor Sragow, Bergman had an affair with the director behind the back of her husband, dentist Dr Petter Lindström. This persisting discontentment – and a longing for a greatness that seemed to her unachievable on the studio assembly line – inspired Bergman to reach out to Roberto Rossellini, one of the apostles of a new, rough-edged sort of cinema that was coming out of Italy, attached to the label 'neorealism'.

Bergman's fling with Fleming was only a rehearsal for the grand, passionate scene that was to come next. It began with a letter. In 1947, when Rossellini was at the height of his international fame, Bergman wrote to him the following: "I saw your films *Open City* and *Paisan*, and enjoyed them very much. If you need a Swedish actress who speaks English very well, who has not forgotten her German, who is not very understandable in French, and who in Italian knows only *ti amo*, I am ready to come and make a film with you."

This epistolary exchange is included in an 84-page booklet that is among the many trimmings accompanying the Criterion Collection's beautifully packaged four-disc box *3 Films by Roberto Rossellini Starring Ingrid Bergman*, a set that comes fairly groaning under the weight

of extras. Responding to Bergman's slightly brazen "ti amo", Rossellini, who was himself married and carrying on an affair with his *Rome, Open City* star Anna Magnani, described at length a scenario for a film. A woman confined in one of the displaced persons camps that sprang up to house the human detritus blown about by the war marries a prison guard in order to escape, only to find herself transported to a prison of a different kind – his ancestral home, an inhospitable island in the Tyrrhenian Sea lorded over by a smouldering, volatile, permanently active volcano. Bergman was sold. She decamped for Italy and, in the spring of 1949, began shooting a film that was variously titled *After the Hurricane* and *Land of God* before eventually being rechristened by bankrolling RKO head Howard Hughes as *Stromboli*.

It was a long, perilous, arduous shoot – Ludovico Muratori, an executive who was on the scene, died from inhalation of volcano fumes. For the sake of her art, Bergman ascended the mountain and dutifully choked on sulphurous gas, but soon she was to be subjected to another, greater ordeal. A doctor's visit confirmed Bergman's anxieties – she was two months pregnant with a son by Rossellini. They decided to keep the child, and this decision would substantially alter the nature of the film they were in the process of making – for it was then Rossellini's practice to improvise, to let his films grow and change of their own accord, in the course of creation. In abetting Bergman's desertion of Hollywood, Rossellini gave her the role of a lifetime: martyr for love.

In February of 1950, 34-year-old Bergman gave birth to Renato, the first of her three children with Rossellini, the most famous of whom is actress Isabella. Back in the US, this happy event was the occasion of a public outcry. On the Senate floor, Democrat Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado denounced Bergman as "a free-love cultist" and "Hollywood's apostle of degradation". A *Daily Variety* critic saw fit to describe Bergman as a "bosomy wanton". Not everyone Stateside was so unsympathetic. Dust-bowl balladeer Woody Guthrie, then living with his family on Mermaid Avenue in Coney Island, penned an erotic reverie called 'Ingrid Bergman', an expression of his own intense sexual longing delivered in the persona of a come-hither Rossellini, with *Stromboli*'s spewing volcano turned into a handy phallic metaphor. "If you'll walk across my camera," Guthrie wrote, "I will flash the world your story; I will pay you more than money..."

All told, Bergman would walk before the camera six times for Rossellini – she went to the stake once more in 1954's filmed opera *Joan of Arc at the Stake*, and appeared in an adaptation of the Stefan Zweig novel *Fear*, which was released the same year. Criterion's box is limited to Bergman and Rossellini's first three collaborations, as well as their comic short *The Chicken*, originally part of a 1953 omnibus film called *Of Life and Love*, which purported to demystify the personas of its diva starlets, including Alida Valli and La Magnani, by showing them in daily life.

Rossellini and Bergman's collaborations didn't wholly desanctify her persona, but they turned



Bergman with George Sanders in *Journey to Italy*

her from a plaster saint into a flesh-and-blood pilgrim, one who sweated and screwed and got herself hopelessly, totally lost before she could see a glimmer of salvation. The grouping of the first three Bergman-Rossellini films is apt, for they are bound by a thematic consistency. In each, Bergman plays an outsider in Italy, being introduced to a strange new world. *Stromboli*'s Karin is followed by the well-off hostess in *Europe '51*, who abandons the parlour for the slums, and then by Bergman's neglected, childless Katharine in *Journey to Italy*. Katharine and husband Alex (George Sanders) arrive in Naples to arrange a real-estate transaction and are faced with the plain fact that their marriage is a farce, maintained out of merest convenience.

In each film, Bergman's character has a revelation that is tinged with the divine. At the denouement of *Stromboli*, the heretofore agnostic Karin, who has been running from her husband, lies splayed across the black rock of

Rossellini pulled Bergman down off the pedestal that David O. Selznick and Lew Wasserman had set her on



The director and the star: Rossellini and Bergman

the quieted volcano, praising God for allowing her to survive the night. *Europe '51* is essentially a contemporary-set, gender-swap variation on Rossellini's *The Flowers of St Francis* – presented at the same 1950 Venice Film Festival as *Stromboli* – with Bergman's female St Francis taking her own vow of poverty. In *Journey to Italy*, Katharine and Alex finally decide on a divorce after having shown one another little but acrimony and indifference for the length of the film – but then, caught up in the surge of bodies at a religious procession, they have a simultaneous change of heart. As in both predecessors, this Damascus moment is profoundly affecting and agonisingly precarious. As Fred Camper notes in one of the five accompanying essays in the booklet, Rossellini's "images always seem to be reaching beyond their borders", and likewise his narratives seem to project past the concluding *Fine*. "My endings are turning points," Rossellini said, "then it begins again. But as for what it is that begins, I don't know."

Rossellini pulled Bergman down off the pedestal made of fan magazines that David O. Selznick and Lew Wasserman had set her on, took her out of the studio and into the street. His intention, as Richard Brody notes in his essay, was "to strip her of her pride, to yoke her to purpose, and to reconstruct her artistic sensibility on moral principles". But if this was a true collaboration between two headstrong artists, we must allow that the transformation went both ways. While Rossellini introduced Bergman to a new way of working, she gave him access to a new way of seeing both his country and his countrymen, from the perspective of an outsider, and a woman besides. Rossellini was duly thrashed by the intelligentsia for abandoning the mission of neorealism to bask in glamour and paparazzi flashbulbs, though in truth his restless intelligence had always chafed against the constraints of the neorealist label. That Rossellini, in *Journey to Italy*, was beginning to do something entirely new – create a kind of filmmaking as personal as a home movie, with plot reduced to a chain of non-events – did not escape the attention of the coming generation, future architects of the modern European arthouse cinema, not least the young critics of *Cahiers du cinéma*.

Each of these three films ends on a precipice, in an in-between space from which the next move is uncertain. Does Karin, after her mountaintop revelation, return to her fisherman husband? Does Irene stay confined in the sanatorium? Will Katharine and Alex, after their emotional reunion, overcome apparently intrinsic incompatibility and make it through another year? We can only say for certain that Ingrid Bergman, having climbed halfway over her own volcano, turned back. By every account Bergman and Rossellini were better as collaborators than as partners in a marriage. She left Rome, returned to Hollywood to star opposite Yul Brynner in 1956's *Anastasia*, a role for which she won her second Academy Award, welcomed with mostly open arms by the American public that had spurned her. But these remarkable films were made – and in a larger sense, a point of no return had been passed. **S**

New releases

BARBARA BROADCAST

Radley Metzger; USA 1977; Distribpix/Region-free Blu-ray and DVD Dual Format; 82 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: 'hard' and 'soft' versions, commentary, documentaries ('The Making of Barbara', 'A Tribute to the Players'), trivia subtitles, outtakes, trailers, radio ads, stills and ephemera gallery, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

While various labels on both sides of the Atlantic (Arrow, Cult Epics, Synapse) have done a fine job of bringing Radley Metzger's more respectable erotica to Blu-ray, NYC-based porn specialist Distribpix has brought similar curatorial standards to Metzger's 'Henry Paris' films, five hardcore efforts originally directed pseudonymously to avoid legal hassle. These were initially released on DVD, but their first Blu-ray, *The Opening of Misty Beethoven*, made enough of a splash to get namechecked on one of *Sight & Sound*'s 2012 best-of-the-year lists.

The follow-up, *Barbara Broadcast*, offers many similar pleasures, even if the film itself doesn't quite match its predecessor's standards. Whereas *Misty Beethoven* is a rare example of an unambiguously pornographic film that is equally engrossing for its *Pygmalion*-inspired plot, decent acting and production values and consistently witty dialogue (so much so that the softcore version is of unusual interest, as it features more of the latter), *Barbara Broadcast* is more loosely structured around a series of successive sexual encounters with little narrative or character development. Indeed, the notional stars – Annette Haven as celebrity hooker Barbara Broadcast and C.J. Laing as her journalist profiler Roberta – don't even appear in the concluding segment, an S&M affair shot at the time of *Misty Beethoven* and featuring its two leads Jamie Gillis and Constance Money instead.

But the extensive opening scene, set in a lavish restaurant whose unflappable waiting staff are called upon to deliver more nourishment than just food and drink, may be the most memorable conceit that Metzger ever came up with – there's a delightfully Buñuelian insouciance to the fact that nobody bats an

eyelid at the shenanigans going on beside and sometimes on top of neighbouring tables. It's also an impressive choreographic feat given the evidently limited budget: Metzger's experience with far more lavish productions clearly paid dividends here. The four remaining set pieces are also comfortably ahead of the generic norm, but the film's disjointedness betrays the fact that the 'porno chic' era was already drawing to a close.

Disc: As with *Misty Beethoven*, this is an astonishingly comprehensive package, from a surely definitive high-definition restoration of the unexpurgated version (urolagnia and all) to numerous intelligently context-setting extras, including a director's commentary. Only some sloppy proofreading of an otherwise fascinating subtitle trivia track falls short of what is otherwise easily up to Criterion or Masters of Cinema standards.

BULLFIGHTER AND THE LADY

Budd Boetticher; USA 1951; Olive Films/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 124 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The only filmmaker to make films about bullfighting who had actually at one point been a professional matador, Boetticher was already a master of the B-movie by the 50s, at which point, for his first screenwriting credit, he decided to fictionalise his own youthful experience as a nervy gringo in the Mexican bullring. The resulting film, Budd's 11th as director, has a reputation as a debacle, cut down (reputedly by John Ford, at producer John Wayne's behest) to two thirds of its original length, and roundly dismissed by critics with eyes only for the Ranown cycle a few years hence.

Truth is, in its magisterial restored form, Boetticher's brooding, nuanced study in tragic masculine existentialism – not to mention ugly-American hubris – is enthralling and mature, without rival as the best film ever made about *el toro*, and one of the most evocative US movies ever made about Mexico. Shot largely on location, the film follows Boetticherian Yank sportsman Johnny Regan (a sinewy and blond

Robert Stack) as he pushes his way into the circle of famed *torero* Manolo Estrada (Gilbert Roland) in order to be trained in the fighting of bulls and become a *corrida* star himself. As he barges through centuries of custom and ethnic defensiveness, his ambition is fuelled by his yen for a limpid and sweet señorita (Joy Page) in Estrada's cohort, and complicated by his dawning awareness of the sport's cost to life and limb.

Of course, the film takes the bloodsport as simply a Hemingwayesque axiom of life in Mexico, only as heroic as the bulls themselves are fearsome and life-threatening. Mostly, though, the film is a miracle of authenticity – authentic textures, landscapes, craft process, longeurs and details about Mexican culture, all obviously born of first-hand experience and observation, and making Boetticher's film something of a startling anomaly in mid-century Hollywood, where roughly applied totems and accents were all a movie usually needed to evoke a foreign culture. Boetticher used dozens of real Mexican *toreros* in small roles, and took care to turn what at first appeared to be clichéd characters – Roland's Fairbanksian toreador, Katy Jurado's fiery Mexican wife – into unpredictable, four-dimensional beings, often with private agendas. The cast, even hammy Roland, are imbued with ambivalence and quiet reason; Page (best remembered as the young Bulgarian refugee in *Casablanca*) and Paul Fix (as a weathered scholar of *corrida* casualties) are standouts, but the movie's linchpin is Stack, whose abrasive cock-of-the-walk gains humanity with every dreadful gaze out at the animals – which are intimidating, particularly given the seamless use of genuine bullfight footage and even the sizeable horned 'calf' battled in one scene by Stack himself.

Disc: Beautiful recapture of Jack Draper's cinematography, except in the scenes restoring the film to its director's cut, which remain fuzzy and washed-out.

CAMILLE REDOUBLE

Noémie Lvovsky; France 2012; Gaumont/Region-free Blu-ray; 115 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: commentary by Lvovsky and co-writer Florence Sayvos on selected scenes and cut scenes, rehearsals and improvisations, trailer

Reviewed by David Thompson

Camille redouble is translated as *Camille Rewinds*, with reference to the now dying practice of spooling back tape (an effect affectionately reproduced in the menu for this disc). Noémie Lvovsky's fifth feature follows in the genre most strongly identified with the *Back to the Future* trilogy and *Peggy Sue Got Married* (indeed, some critics have suggested that Lvovsky has too heavily plagiarised Coppola's 1986 comedy, in which Kathleen Turner is transported back to her 1960s high school). While for sure some elements are echoed – a woman recently separated from her husband suddenly finds herself reliving her adolescence and the beginnings of that relationship – Lvovsky digs rather deeper into the emotional complexities offered by the fantasy trope. In particular her character Camille, played by the director herself, is faced with having to relive the death of her mother (a touching and restrained performance by Yolande Moreau). This particular aspect



The matador: Robert Stack in *Bullfighter and the Lady*

ENIGMA VARIATIONS

Memories, myths and radical politics all converge in a gloriously experimental film exploring the mystery of the Sphinx

RIDDLES OF THE SPHINX

Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen 1977: BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 91 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: audio commentary by Laura Mulvey and Winfried Pauleit, 'Laura Mulvey in Conversation', 'Penthesilea: Queen of the Amazons' (1974), booklet

Reviewed by Charlie Fox

The Sphinx, that monstrous femme fatale of Greek myth, is a very cinematic creature, a gorgeous, inscrutable, devouring hallucination of womanhood, all lion's paws and eagle's wings. *Riddles of the Sphinx*, Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's woozy experimental film ('experimental' at its most alien, gloriously non-commercial extreme), begins with images of her various heiresses. There are snapshots of Garbo, that brooding vampire of silent film, complete with gasping caption: "*Sphinx moderne!*" And next to her, horror-movie creatures midway through becoming girls. The Sphinx is fated to symbolise dangerous femininity – too much knowledge, too much mystery. In her introduction, Mulvey claims that it embodies a "resistance to patriarchy", making it a fine maternal totem for feminist cinema.

This film is a celluloid counterpart to Mulvey's famous 1975 polemic 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', a calculated refusal of the cinematic practices that conjure women as mere objects for male lust, watched in "the half-light of the imaginary".

Lovers and theorists together, she and Wollen jointly tore at what they saw as cinema's representational masquerade, then used it to illuminate their thoughts. Included as an extra on this BFI release (though itself feature-length) is their first collaboration, *Penthesilea: Queen of the Amazons* (1974), which examined the semiotics of female heroism from the ancients to Wonder Woman. Sadly absent is its punkish, playful sister piece *Amy!* (1980), an oblique portrait of the pilot Amy Johnson.

Elsewhere Mulvey talks of taking "an aesthetic pleasure in uneven textures" – and indeed, for all the demands of its narcotic lethargy and stylistic dissonances, symptoms of this pleasure run through the film, which pursues a thrilling, mutant form as if in homage to the Sphinx. There are transcriptions of dreams, cryptic sequences involving a female acrobat and a toy maze, delirious footage of Egypt and psychoanalytic monologues about childhood memories. Sometimes the speech of an unseen narrator suggests a traumatised attempt to grasp the jelly-like instability of language, all the near-rhymes and echoes in a maternal vocabulary: "blood, brood, breast, nesting..." The prevailing atmosphere is one of half-



Cryptic and unnerving: Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's *Riddles of the Sphinx*

tranquillised anxiety as the mood alternates between the dreamy and vaguely unnerving.

The film's central section is a sociological report passing itself off as a narrative about Louise (a bored, Brechtian Dinah Stabb) and her toddler daughter. "Motherhood and how to live it, or not to live it", Mulvey announces at the start, is the key riddle of the film. Louise works and struggles to find suitable care for her daughter; the conditions of the workplace appear innately inhospitable towards women en masse. "Is exploitation outside the home better than oppression within it?" asks the narrator. Louise separates from her editor husband and joins up with a female colleague, maybe slipping out of the patriarchal system.

The performances are nervy, dissociated and purposefully brittle – akin to a trancelike recasting of kitchen-sink realism that falls far from drama and deep into a peculiar conceptual operation. The camera slowly circles every space it occupies in cool sweeps reminiscent of Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967), recording the dead foliage colour-schemes of 1970s interiors, eerily

Strangely dreamy, this mysterious work inhabits an outland of aesthetics scarcely breached by most films

empty stretches of London, marshy parkland and murky linoleum in an industrial canteen. The somnambulistic movement through these scenes is characteristic of the film's strange temperament. That something so weirdly severe, steeped in *écriture féminine* and psychoanalysis, appeared under the auspices of the BFI is a sign of how *critical* and vivid feminism was throughout the 1970s, how it lived in full flame at the centre, or in secret as the unspoken Other, of so much in that decade (philosophy, the *avants* skeins of art, all colours of critique); and maybe how crucial cinema was in its first blaze of expression – the medium where its desire to break with masculine codes could be realised in the sharpest way.

But you never mistake the film for some flinty, airless tract. *Riddles of the Sphinx* is hypnotic: rigorous and cerebral yet expansive and strangely dreamy. It now looks like a significant addition to the sprawling history of the essay film, but that classification doesn't catch its disorientating force. Formal risk, radical politics, memories, myths and dreams messily converge. This mysterious work inhabits an outland of aesthetics scarcely breached by most films.

The transfer is sharp but with a glittery patina of archival deterioration. Fine extras include Rob Young's essay on Mike Ratledge's electronic score and an interview with Mulvey recorded on the day that Margaret Thatcher, that sadly much less fantastical monster, died.

New releases

of the scenario, more than her dealings with her goofy ex-to-be Eric (Samir Guesmi), proves to be the film's true emotional core and (as confirmed by his comments in one of the extras) it was what convinced producer Jean-Louis Livi to become involved.

But *Camille Redouble* is by no means all latent darkness. Lvovsky as her own heroine makes a beguiling transition from a cynical, alcoholic adult to an overly sophisticated teenager living in the 1985 world of clashing colours and bouncy pop music (cue Katrina and the Waves, Bananarama and so on). Lvovsky as director has specialised in female-centred dramas in the quintessentially intimate French realist mode, and this more overtly comic film is no exception, with Camille's gang of friends celebrated for their innate solidarity and wacky humour. Boys, on the other hand, appear as a race apart, sexually awkward and mainly plain eccentric. This extends to some very offbeat cameos from the likes of Jean-Pierre Léaud as a bizarre watch-mender and Mathieu Amalric as a bullying teacher.

The film threatens at times to descend into a whimsical shambles, with its abrupt shifts of tone, ditz editing and plot contrivances, but for the most part it carries huge conviction, not least in Lvovsky's own energetic performance, which manages to overcome the obvious absurdity of a fortysomething passing for a teenager.

Disc: A fine transfer with good English subtitles, also available on DVD.

The extras are in French only.

CHILDREN'S FILM FOUNDATION COLLECTION: SCARY STORIES

THE MAN FROM NOWHERE/HAUNTERS OF THE DEEP/OUT OF THE DARKNESS

James Hill/Andrew Bogle/John Krish; UK 1974/84/85; BFI/Region 0 DVD; Certificate PG; 57/59/66 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1/1.85:1/1.33:1; Features: Essay booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

One of the original aims of the Children's Film Foundation was output that avoided "stimulation of morbid excitement or attitudes" – surely the very definition of a good ghost story's function. Kudos is due, then, to this trio of CFF past-times chillers for their skill in evoking the gothic without gloom or gruesomeness. Made in the 70s and 80s, when children's horror drama was at its height, they're well crafted and extremely atmospheric, albeit less terrifying than, say, the flesh-creeping TV anthology *Shadows* (1975-78) or *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1983).

In *The Man from Nowhere*, veteran director James Hill (*Born Free*) brings noticeable dramatic tension to John Tully's *The Innocents*-style story of a Victorian orphan haunted by a stranger. It's handsomely mounted and well played – not always CFF strengths – and much of its impact comes from Sarah Hollis-Andrews's feisty playing as the rattled Alice, softening the film's late change of gear from chiller to chase-comedy.

The Cornish mine-mystery *Haunters of the Deep* isn't in the same class, its direction and scripting being businesslike and its playing more stilted, though Andrew Keir's finger-wagging old miner brings a hint of his Hammer Horror-honed gravitas. Yet the film manages to weave in Cornish mining history

creatively, and makes the local jobs crisis a key point, giving a genuine sense of place.

Best of the lot, however, is John Krish's genuinely scary *Out of the Darkness*, which enhances the routine child-led adventure template with supernatural visitations from a Derbyshire 'plague' village. Krish introduces some typically dark themes (lynch mobs and an implied child-killing, for starters) and the film's unsettling last act, in which one of the modern children finds himself the subject of a torchlight hunt by 17th-century villagers, gives off a whiff of very English terror worthy of *The Wicker Man*.

Disc: The high-definition transfers are nicely done (*The Man from Nowhere* in particular). Apart from a valuable overview of the CFF's output from Robert Shail, the booklet content has less heft than one would expect, being over-reliant on short anecdotal pieces. It does, though, yield one gem from John Tully, who admits to viewing the CFF as "a rather shadowy but benign organisation, operating in the background to provide me and others with much needed work".

THE MUMMY

Terence Fisher; UK 1959; Icon Entertainment/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate PG; 88 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1/1.37:1 (DVD anamorphic where necessary); Features: supporting feature ('Stolen Face'), commentary, documentaries ('Unwrapping the Mummy', 'The Hammer Rep Company', 'The House of Horror: Memories of Bray', 'The World of Hammer: Peter Cushing'), industry promo reel, stills gallery

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Having revamped *Frankenstein* in 1957 and *Dracula* in 1958 with huge international success, it's not surprising that Hammer Films and Terence Fisher would turn to another 1930s Universal classic for inspiration, although in

the event they lifted more from *The Mummy's Hand* (1940), *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942) and *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944) than from Karl Freund's 1932 original. Compared with its blood-and-thunder predecessors, Hammer's *The Mummy* is comparatively anaemic (it's hard to believe that it got an X certificate back in the day), but it still has plenty going for it, not least Christopher Lee's Karloff-challenging, largely wordless performance in the title role, his eyes the only means of emotional expression under the sticky, swamp-soiled bandages.

Besides some lumbering assaults, Lee has little interaction with his usual sparring partner Peter Cushing, who instead forms a lively triple act with veterans Raymond Huntley and Felix Aylmer as an obsessed trio of 19th-century archaeologists who achieve their dream of finding the long-lost tomb of Princess Ananka and quickly wish they hadn't. Although the film's original audience, just three years after the Suez fiasco, would have clocked the fez-toting Mehmet Bey (George Pastell) as an obvious villain, this is much less clear when seen through post-imperial eyes – surely Cushing et al are just as guilty of culturally insensitive plundering and notionally deserve everything they get?

As one might expect from Hammer in its pomp, designer Bernard Robinson and cinematographer Jack Asher have a field day with the Egyptian and Victorian sets and garish coloured filters, while Vaughan Williams protégé Franz Reizenstein's atmospheric score offers such a convincing alternative to James Bernard that it's a shame he wrote comparatively little for film.

Disc: Clearly extensively restored, this new high-definition transfer is a huge advance on the old, decidedly murky DVD release (the colours in particular pop off the screen), and



La notte Paradoxically, for such a self-consciously chilly film, the characters' existential plight ultimately becomes almost unbearably moving

we're also offered a choice of framing: the original cinema ratio of 1.66:1 or the entire negative area of 1.37:1 (unsurprisingly, the former is more compositionally satisfying). Highlights of a trunkload of extras are the lively yet impeccably scholarly commentary from Marcus Hearn and Jonathan Rigby and an entire supporting feature – Terence Fisher's rare *Stolen Face* (1952), a bizarre but enjoyable horror-thriller in which Paul Henreid's plastic surgeon hits on a novel if professionally unethical way of getting his lost love back.

LA NOTTE

Michelangelo Antonioni; Italy/France 1961; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 12; 122 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

"Beauty is depressing, in certain circumstances," opines Marcello Mastroianni's writer Giovanni near the start of Antonioni's first film since his international groundbreaker *L'avventura*. He's visiting a dying friend with his wife Lidia (Jeanne Moreau), which ends up triggering multiple crises of confidence (emotional, intellectual, marital, social) which play out in various ways, be they through Lidia's solo daytime perambulation in the less touristic parts of Milan or the pair's nocturnal visit to a society party – the latter scene prompting one of Pauline Kael's most notorious put-downs when she dubbed *La notte* and various contemporaries (notably *Last Year at Marienbad*) "Come-Dressed-as-the-Sick-Soul-of-Europe Parties".

Europe's soul may have been ailing but the film has worn its half-century well, not least because the combination of Gianni di Venanzo's immaculately framed black-and-white cinematography and a preference for surroundings made from glass and steel rather than brick and wood has always given it an oddly timeless quality – it's an almost exact contemporary of Fellini's *La dolce vita*, featuring the same lead actor and a very similar upmarket society setting, yet it has dated far less thanks to Antonioni's refusal to kowtow to fashion or supply pat psychological wrappers.

If we can never accurately 'read' either Giovanni or Lidia or any of the people they encounter, from their fellow party guest Valentina (Monica Vitti, Antonioni's regular muse) to an institutionalised nymphomaniac (Maria Pia Luzi) who kisses a visibly unnerved Giovanni with bared teeth, this ensures that the film remains as tantalisingly mysterious to us as its events and their implications do to its characters. Paradoxically, for such a self-consciously chilly film, their existential plight ultimately becomes almost unbearably moving, the more so for taking place in such implacably pristine surroundings. It's little wonder that Stanley Kubrick included it on a 1963-compiled personal top ten: Antonioni had already made his own space odyssey without ever leaving terra firma.

Disc: A film this obsessed with surface texture benefits more than many from high-definition upgrade, and this beautiful new restoration (which also fuels Criterion's concurrent Region A edition) is hard to fault. The only on-disc extra is a trailer, but the 56-page booklet



Tunnel vision: *Out of the Darkness*

(recycled from the old DVD) includes an essay by *S&S*'s Brad Stevens and a fascinatingly self-analytical Antonioni Q&A from 1961.

RED RIVER

Howard Hawks; USA 1948; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate U; 133 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: conversation between Dan Sallitt and Jaime Christley, Lux Radio Theater presentation (1949), booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

'Mutiny on the Bounty in the sagebrush', as *Red River* has often been characterised, was Hawks's first western, adapted from 'Blazing Guns on the Chisholm Trail', a story by Borden Chase serialised in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Though Chase was engaged as screenwriter, Hawks brought in another writer and made radical changes to the story, especially to the final showdown between Tom Dunson (John Wayne) and his adopted son Matthew Garth (Montgomery Clift). Chase, furious, never forgave Hawks, and more than 20 years later was still grizzling in print about how he "got screwed". Hawks, in typically forthright style, responded that Chase was "full of shit".

The key dynamic of *Red River* is the generational clash between Dunson, the domineering ranch boss, and the more humane Garth, who eventually rebels against his increasingly tyrannical father-figure, taking his herd away from him at gunpoint to complete the epic cattle drive. But it's also a clash of acting styles, and Hawks encouraged Clift to underplay against Wayne's overbearing physicality. Wayne, uneasily aware of what was being done to him, called Clift an "arrogant little bastard" but was nonetheless forced to up his game to match his co-star. On seeing the initial cut, Wayne's mentor John Ford told Hawks: "I never knew the sonofabitch could act."

What Hawks brought out – and Ford would later exploit, especially in *The Searchers* – was the sadness in Wayne. Behind the rolling walk,

the macho arrogance, is a sense of regret, of a man whose own obduracy pushes him away from people. For there's another dynamic in *Red River*. It stems from a brief scene in the film's prologue, set 14 years before the main action, between Wayne and an actress who's on screen for barely two minutes. Colleen Gray plays Fen, the woman Dunson leaves behind when he quits the wagon train to strike south into Texas. She begs to go with him, and the erotic intensity of her appeal is breathtaking in its urgency. But Dunson, stubborn as ever, refuses, and she's killed by the Comanche. The loss, and his guilt over it, shadow him for the rest of the film, coming out explicitly in his encounter with Tess (Joanne Dru).

Red River isn't perfect. Full of shit or not, Chase had a point about the weakness of the ending, and some of the humour involving Walter Brennan grows tiresome. But with its visual grandeur – the stampede sequence, the slow 240-degree pan as the men wait in the dawn for the start signal – and Dimitri Tiomkin's striding theme, turning steadily darker and more obsessive, it has an expansive sweep that's hard to resist.

Disc: A clean, crisp transfer that does justice to Russell Harlan's photography. Well-packed booklet, but neither of the on-disc extras adds much.

STREETS OF FIRE

Walter Hill; USA 1984; Second Sight Films/Region B Blu-ray; 94 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: hour-long documentary, original electronic press kit, music videos

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Walter Hill's "rock & roll fable" *Streets of Fire* is now almost 30 years old – which means that roughly the same time has elapsed between its year of release (1984) and the 1950s teen culture it aesthetically – if not musically – mingles with a gaudy contemporary sheen. Its ambiguous setting is explained in the coy, sci-fi-ish opening epigram ("Another time, another place"), but it turns out that Hill was locked in a losing battle with the producers, who were committed to slathering bombastic 80s pop all over the soundtrack. It's this element – the power ballads mimed by kidnapped pop heroine Ellen Aim (Diane Lane) – that date the film more than anything else. Yet in leapfrogging the 1960s and 70s for its reference points, the film creates a thematic bridge between two crucial 'births' in youth culture: that of teenage culture per se, and that of the MTV generation. The hysteria remains the same but the medium has changed.

In spite of its apparently joyous celebration of pop culture as a unifying community factor, *Streets of Fire* displays a teasingly ambivalent, even gloomy, attitude towards the benefits of fame. Aim, though seemingly adored by each inhabitant of the film's hermetic American everytown, spends the entirety of her offstage time in a giant sulk. This is, of course, partially down to the trauma of her brief, inexplicable abduction by Willem Dafoe's teddy-boy/gimp/fisherman villain (a look that, unsurprisingly, never caught on). But even when rescued by ex-lover Tom Cody (square-jawed oak tree impersonator Michael Paré), Aim can't muster a smile. The attentions of her manager/lover (Rick Moranis on superbly slimy form)

Television

SMALL SCREEN, BIG ISSUES

In the 1970s, TV plays made headlines, and the one-off drama was the favoured form for tackling urgent social issues

PLAYS FOR BRITAIN

Thames/ITV; UK 1976; Network DVD/Region 2 DVD; 321 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 4:3

Reviewed by Mark Duguid

Will Network's relentless mission to reconstitute every programme ever broadcast on ITV abort before they get to *Songs for Sunday* and *Gone Fishing with Jack Hargreaves*? We must hope so, but for now at least there are still some intriguing nuggets in the mud, including this interesting if uneven sextet of mid-70s plays.

Back then, the TV play was still the premier dramatic form for dealing with contemporary social issues. The BBC's *Play for Today* regularly wrote headlines, and small-screen drama's big beasts – Dennis Potter, Ken Loach, Jim Allen, Tony Garnett, Mike Leigh – all favoured the single form. Even so, the writing was on the wall – channel controllers were increasingly favouring more bankable series and serials over the relative expense and unpredictable audience returns of singles.

Plays for Britain was billed by Verity Lambert, then Thames's head of drama, as revivifying the single play for “the more urgent days of 1976”, with an accent on emerging talents and contemporary subjects: Northern Ireland, racism, child abuse and alienated youth. As so often with archive drama, the variety of subject and approach is bracing.

Inevitably, it's the most ‘experimental’ work that most shows its age. Liverpool poet and occasional Scaffoldier Roger McGough's *The Life-Swappers* is a piece of surreal whimsy with aspirations to social satire, in which put-upon cuckold Trevor swaps roles with new-age, health-obsessed Bunny, equally discontented with his foodie wife, kickstarting a *La Ronde*-style cycle of exchanging identities. Directed with pantomime gusto by Jim Goddard, it's a bit of an endurance test but it demonstrates the formal and aesthetic freedom once offered to writers, directors and actors.

The Paradise Run plays with form with more serious intent. A naive young squaddie, hopelessly adrift in Northern Ireland, is trapped into betraying his comrades in arms, while his youthful commanding officer wrestles with his own demons. The TV debut of radical playwright Howard Brenton, it's defiantly non-naturalistic, employing stylised dialogue, voiceover, hallucination and comic misunderstanding to convey the absurdity and incomprehensibility of occupation. But it's also frustratingly elliptical and feels tied to theatre.

Also new to TV was the 23-year-old Stephen Poliakoff, the *Evening Standard*'s most promising playwright of 1975. His *Hitting Town*, a transfer



Making a point: *Sunshine in Brixton*

from the stage, is a tale of provincial ennui in which student rebel Ralph drags his sister Claire, nursing a recent relationship collapse, from her grim tower-block flat for an equally grim nocturnal adventure, going from Formica-saturated greasy spoon and barren shopping precinct to tawdry disco, picking up a dim, taciturn waitress on the way. The evening's highlight is a childish prank call to a local phone-in DJ, whom Ralph provokes with salacious stories of his sexual relationship with his sister – a fabrication that soon becomes reality. Poliakoff would deal with frustrated urban youth more compellingly in 1979's *Bloody Kids*, but despite its self-conscious taboo-busting (incest is now a wearily familiar Poliakoff obsession), *Hitting Town* does channel something of the coiled fury just finding expression in

Small-screen drama's big beasts – Dennis Potter, Ken Loach, Jim Allen, Tony Garnett, Mike Leigh – all favoured the single form



Fighting talk: *Fast Hands*, one of ITV's 'Plays for Britain'

punk – and newcomer Mick Ford's snarling, leather-jacketed antihero is a dead ringer for the young Tom ‘Glad to Be Gay’ Robinson.

You might expect Brian Glover – actor, wrestler, Loach protégé and professional Yorkshireman – to stay closer to home for his own TV writing debut, but *Sunshine in Brixton* paints a credible picture of a black teenager's difficult path through a South London comprehensive. It's helped by ex-teacher Glover's light-touch handling of the issues (racism, Rachmanism, narrow horizons), believable performances and characteristically naturalistic direction by Les Blair.

There's a touch of Leigh about Dinsdale Landen's performance as a bullying stepfather in *Shuttlecock*, an NSPCC-endorsed story of middle-class child abuse. No doubt an important corrective to complacent notions of abuse as merely a function of poverty and poor education, it's unsatisfying drama, tipped out of balance by Landen's overripe caricature of a yacht-club-and-old-school-tie suburban tyrant whose own public-school thrashings “never did me any harm”.

The most eye-catching title here – the Alan Clarke-directed *Fast Hands* – also turns out to be the most rewarding. This was the sixth of seven Clarke collaborations with writer Roy Minton, the last being the notorious borstal drama *Scum*, banned by the BBC for its harrowing brutality. *Fast Hands* is another story of youth and violence: an aspiring boxer is exposed to the limelight too young and ends up defeated and brain-damaged. Spare, raw and shorn of unnecessary dialogue or exposition, it says all it needs to say about youthful ambition, greed and the betrayal of working-class hopes entirely without sermon or any visible signs of authorial intervention. At its centrepiece is a nine-minute, unsimulated fight scene, as punishing and riveting as any filmed. 📺

New releases

and a spunky young female hanger-on only serve to accentuate her anomie. Aim's glowering presence serves to reveal the disparity between image and reality – a fascinating thread for a film so determinedly shallow on the surface.

An even more conflicted take on popular culture arrives when Cody's ragtag band of avenging outlaws literally hijacks the tour bus of black soul four-piece The Sorels, causing one to wonder whether Hill is making a satirical point about the co-option of black music by white artists for a mainstream white audience. The film's loveliest moment arrives when warring factions are united in admiration of The Sorels' caramel tones. However, the band's ultimate subsumption into Aim's honking, Bonnie Tyler-esque rock show makes for a queasy resolution.

The big irony surrounding this ostensibly accessible paean to mainstream popular culture was that it belly-flopped at the box office. *Streets of Fire* was intended as the first in a trilogy, which never materialised. Instead, caught in some neon hinterland between monomaniacal genius and outright absurdity, it sticks out like a sore thumb in the context of both Hill's career and 80s American cinema in general: that's no bad thing.

Disc: The transfer does justice to the film's neon-slathered aesthetic.

TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT

Dave Robinson; UK 1981; Salvo Sound & Vision/Region 2 PAL DVD; 83 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: audio commentary with director Dave Robinson and band member Chris Foreman

Reviewed by Michael Pattison

The running in-joke of *Take It or Leave It* is that Madness, the popular English ska-pop band whose formation it dramatises, were by that point already famous. The film's 1981 release coincided with their third album *7*, which followed *One Step Beyond...* (1979) and *Absolutely* (1980). In an early scene in the film, you can hear 'Grey Day', the first single from their new record, playing on the radio – the gag being that it's meant to be 1977, before the band's line-up was even complete. As this superb story-so-far account tells it, Madness came together through a combination of grit, resilience and happy accident on the streets and in the job centres of Camden. The mischievous humour on display throughout the film accounts for their lasting appeal, as working-class lads who knew and sang about everyday life without underestimating the importance of having fun; even keyboardist Mike Barson's professional grouching is exaggerated for comic effect.

Take It or Leave It's title suggests a project for diehards only, though invitations to play at both the BBC Television Centre's farewell and on the roof of Buckingham Palace last year suggest this reissue is overdue. The film is also an excellent snapshot of a 1980s London nobody knew, and as a demystifying origins story its value to unemployed budding musicians should go without saying: the band's evolution from a rosy appearance at the back of a pal's house party to a genuinely euphoric backroom gig in Camden's Dublin Castle is haphazard indeed – though all the more rewarding for it.

Disc: Fine transfer, with the same commentary



Spellbound: Joan Fontaine in *The Witches*

(by guitarist Chris 'Chrissy Boy' Foreman and director Robinson) as Virgin's 2002 release, but accompanied by a new 26-track soundtrack CD.

TIME BANDITS

Terry Gilliam; UK 1981; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 116 minutes; Certificate PG; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1; Features: interviews, 'From Script to Screen' featuring Milly Burns's production archive, original trailer

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Conceived because *Brazil* couldn't find backers, *Time Bandits* marks the point at which Gilliam's themes and style emerge fully fledged. Schoolboy Kevin, tumbling through swash-and-buckle history with squabbling dwarves, is surely the first of Gilliam's imagination-inhabiting questing innocents. Dark, cheerfully violent and gleeful (David Warner's caustic Evil remains crisply quotable), the film is the neat, fun-size precursor both to *Brazil*'s dystopian dish and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*'s banquet of baroque fantasy. Not that it's entirely without Monty Python traits, particularly since co-writer Michael Palin penned the historical episodes in the style of extended sketches. And the film – adopting a child's-eye view thematically as well as in its low camera angles – sees the world as inexplicable and adults as absurd, as the Python output did.

If *Matilda* shares its anti-materialist, TV-hating trait, no family film has ever dared to match its subversively tragicomic ending, which was only retained because Gilliam fought to keep it, ironically aided by disaffected audience-research preview cards declaring that "the best bit was The End". The real best bits – such as the mounted knight crashing from the wardrobe, Agamemnon's crashing Minotaur battle and the ravaging of Castiglione – have an enduring impact that speaks to the craft and ingenuity of their low-budget, pre-CGI-era design and optical effects.

Disc: A truly outstanding restoration and transfer, in which colour balance, texture and grain have been beautifully managed to render Ancient Greece deliciously ochred, the giant's seascape blue-greyed rather than bleached. You can even make out what Gilliam claims are George Harrison's irritated notes to him in the final song lyrics. Solid interviews with Gilliam and Palin are bolstered by a trio of excellent crew memoirs, the best in show being production designer Milly Burns's sketch-filled recce-to-shoot rundown.

THE WITCHES

Cyril Frankel; UK 1966; StudioCanal/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 12; 90 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: 'Hammer Glamour' documentary, audio commentary

Reviewed by Vic Pratt

By the time of *The Witches*, Hammer was no longer a studio of ill repute. It was becoming a Great British success story – *Sight & Sound* even made space in 1966 for a short piece, coinciding with this film's release, quietly celebrating the company's journey towards respectability and noting how "professionalism, in fact, has become the keynote of Hammer". Thus, presumably, was the eminently respectable Joan Fontaine lured, at the end of her screen career, into this, perhaps one of Hammer's oddest films. Indeed, watching this distinctly strange amalgam of voodoo, ye olde witchcraft and anxiety dream, one might wonder whether she read the script before signing on the dotted line.

Fontaine plays a teacher traumatised by voodoo rituals in Africa, returned to England to work at a school in a quiet country village. But even here she is not safe from the occult, and gradually becomes convinced that beneath the hamlet's chocolate-box exterior, dreadful satanic secrets lurk. Scripted by *The Quatermass Experiment*'s Nigel Kneale from a Norah Lofts novel, *The Witches* has remained somewhat overlooked. It lacks Hammer's familiar faces, and that same *Sight & Sound* piece complained there were not enough witches in it. Approving mention was made, though, of the lurid climax. Here, in true Hammer style, Latin is ritualistically spouted before the commencement of a spiritedly choreographed, thoroughly inauthentic-looking satanic ceremony – think Dougie Squires Dancers doing devilry. Suddenly all the Beelzebub-crazed locals inexplicably swap everyday attire for am-dram costume-cupboard rags, inoffensively dabbed with dirt and carefully torn with dressmaker's scissors, before one of them ingeniously taps human bones together woodblock style as the jazzily blasphemous frenzy, beaten out on a leopard-skin bongo drum, politely escalates.

It's all splendid fun, but in retrospect it is the ominous first half an hour of the film – with not much happening except for Fontaine questioning her own senses, wondering whether the grinning rustics are as friendly as they seem – that's more successful and fascinating. This foreshadows Kneale's brilliantly ambiguous 1975 television play *Murrian*, about a community turning on an old lady who may – or may not – be a witch. Alas, the unambiguously by-the-numbers ending of *The Witches* plonks us anticlimactically back in familiar horror territory. Nonetheless, it remains an unjustly neglected strand in the contemporary 'folk horror' corn-dolly, weaving an important link somewhere between *Night of the Eagle* and *The Wicker Man*.

Disc: The charming country village looks lovely and the blood is delightfully red in this new 1080p restoration. A fine extra, the documentary *Hammer Glamour* features Hammer's leading ladies recalling just how much they concealed – or revealed – for the studio. Refreshingly, some often overlooked starlets, including the much underrated Vera Day, have their say. 🍷

Television

PORTLANDIA – SEASONS 1 & 2

Broadway Video Entertainment/IFC; USA 2011-12; Medium Rare/Region 2 DVD; 489 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: audio commentaries, 'Intro to Portlandia' documentary, 'Portlandia the Tour' featurette, 'Brunch Village' episode director's cut, blooper reel, 'Thunderant' videos, deleted and extended scenes

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

In this show's opening segment we learn that "Portland is a city where young people go to retire" – and there is certainly something genteel and grey in this hipster sketch comedy co-written by and starring Carrie Brownstein and *Saturday Night Live* regular Fred Armisen. This vaguely proto-nostalgic celebration of local eccentricity ("The dream of the 90s is alive in Portland") is breezy and benign, with occasional blandness countered by a regular supply of name guest stars (in the style of *SNL*). Aimee Mann takes up a new career in domestic service; Jeff Goldblum opens a string-knot store; Steve Buscemi is punished for misusing the toilet facilities at the 'Women and Women First' bookshop (which has porcelain vaginas hanging on its walls). Kyle MacLachlan is the most frequent guest, recurring as the ever-smiling mayor outed for his secret love of Jamaican music ("Mayor openly reggae"). Best of all though is an elaborate shaggy-dog story in which a couple's life is destroyed by an addiction to the new *Battlestar Galactica*; disappointed by the finale (who wasn't?), they decide to create their own, climaxing with appearances by Edward James Olmos, James Callis and Ronald D. Moore, who prove to be especially good sports by switching allegiance to watch a *Doctor Who* marathon.

Disc: An immaculate transfer. The set's huge range of extras includes group commentaries on ten of the 16 episodes.

SELLING HITLER

Euston Films/Warner Sisters/ITV; UK 1991; Network DVD/Region 2 DVD; 300 minutes; Certificate 12; Aspect Ratio 4:3; Features: stills gallery

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

Three weeks after April Fool's Day 1983, *Stern* magazine in Germany announced that it would be publishing extracts from some 60 or so volumes of Adolf Hitler's diaries, with the *Sunday Times* doing the honours in the UK. Within days, gold turned to pyrite when it emerged that the publishers were the dupes of a multimillion-Deutschmark hoax. A classic tale of hubris and greed, this miniseries was adapted by Howard Schuman from Robert Harris's account of the affair with considerable fidelity, which was sensible given how meticulously researched the Harris book is (the index alone runs to 15 pages).

This cautionary tale of rampant chequebook journalism drips with irony but mostly plays things straight and is by turns hilarious and frightful, anatomising the seductive muse that overwhelmed its huge cast of (real) characters and ultimately led to substantial jail terms for forger Konrad 'Connie' Kujau (played by Alexei Sayle) and journalist and Nazi-ophile Gerd Heidemann.

The theme is self-delusion, the mirage of Wagnerian conquest and a historic journalistic scoop ultimately scuppered by avarice even though the sybaritic Heidemann (played by



Portlandia This vaguely proto-nostalgic celebration of local eccentricity is breezy and benign, with a regular supply of name guest stars

Jonathan Pryce as a rather mercenary version of the equally dream-sodden Sam from *Brazil*) never accepts the truth of the forgery. With the ending never in doubt, the parade of star turns keeps the story ticking over swiftly, with Roger Lloyd Pack especially good as David Irving, while Barry Humphries has a great time as Rupert Murdoch.

Disc: The series is entirely on 16mm, and the format's essential graininess is handled very well in this otherwise extras-free release.

YOUNG MONTALBANO – COLLECTION 1

Rai Fiction/Palomar/Rai 1; Italy 2012; Acorn Media/Region 2 DVD; 664 minutes; Certificate 15; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: stills gallery, text biographies

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

The Continental crime drift continues to deliver with this highly entertaining spin-off from the *Inspector Montalbano* series. In a post-postmodern pseudo-modernist age where pop-culture shelf-lives get shorter while reimaginings and reboots arrive sooner and sooner, there is something very satisfying when a prequel like this bucks the trend and actually succeeds on its own terms.

Andrea Camilleri's Salvo Montalbano, easily the most significant fictional character to emerge from Italy's benighted Berlusconi era, has been played on TV by Luca Zingaretti for the past

15 years, though this (seemingly inevitable) prequel is unusual in as much as the 'mothership' is still running its own course in parallel.

We begin in 1990 with our callow protagonist (the follicly unchallenged Michele Riondino) awaiting promotion to *commissario*. Stuck in a remote mountainous region, he pines for life near the sea but at least has the comfort of his sweet and supportive girlfriend Mery. In the episodes that follow he will make it to the shores of his beloved hometown Vigata and find his distinctive seafront home, but will lose the girl before beginning anew with Livia (after a brief contest with the squad's serial womaniser Mimì Augello), here played rather more sympathetically than in later years – understandably perhaps, after decades with the commitment-phobe protagonist.

As with the *Morse* prequel *Endeavour*, the main pleasure is not necessarily in the unravelling of the often highly convoluted plots (as always, all by Camilleri) but instead in seeing the various personae, as we'll come to know them later, slowly slot into place, with only the younger and much too buffoonish Catarella failing to convince.

Disc: The anamorphic widescreen transfer is perfectly decent; subtitles make no attempt to find an analogue for the original's trademark use of Sicilian dialect. **S**

Lost and found

SONS OF AUSTRALIAN ANARCHY

Currently unavailable on DVD, *The Boys* is a ferocious family drama with a magnetic performance by David Wenham

By Austin Collings

In Gordon Burn's *Happy Like Murderers* – his unforgettable account of Fred and Rose West's life at 25 Cromwell Street – key words, paragraphs and incidents repeat themselves throughout the book. It's never-ending, like an unpleasantly detailed dream, looped inside your skull. Even now, 15 years after I first read it, the repetitions feel indelible. The bad patterns. The cruel cycles. Never ending.

One recurring theme is Fred's deep-rooted anti-authoritarianism: "He hated anything official. He had a phobia about the police, the welfare, the planning people, teachers, even midwives and doctors. Anybody in authority. And he brought his children up to hate them. They were brought up believing they would do them only harm. Inside was safe and outside was full of dangers." The warped irony of that last sentence is almost comic. The inside was where it all happened. The bad patterns. The cruel cycles.

Set in suburban Australia and released in 1998, the year *Happy Like Murderers* was published, *The Boys* is also an alternative family drama-cum-domestic horror with another damaged and manipulative outsider at the centre of it all – Brett Sprague. If the walls could talk in this house, you wouldn't believe a word of it.

Inspired by (but not directly based on) the real-life rape of a young Sydney nurse by three brothers, it was originally an award-winning stage play written by Gordon Graham. In an echo of Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*, Brett's return (from prison in this instance) doesn't so much turn everything upside down as restore dysfunctional order, put everything back into its chaotic place. As with any crime family in the movies, from the outwardly sophisticated Corleones to the near-feral Flannery siblings in *State of Grace* (1990), there's a pecking order, a hierarchy of influence. Brett is definitely at the top of his family tree, and the three brothers – 'the boys' – find a skewed comfort in the (re)upheaval he engenders so naturally.

Filled with the Pinteresque menace of uncertainty, the film pans out over the course of an afternoon and night like a contaminated episode of *Neighbours* or a spiked *Home and Away* script, sullenly soundtracked by Australian jazz trio The Necks. Characters are constantly entering and re-entering the frame, talking over each other or talking for the nervous sake of talking. Only, the thing with families is that nothing is forgotten – not for good anyway. Resentment frequently rides high.

Powerlessly confined within their own behavioural loops, the characters retain a cutting, chippy wit beneath the cleverly drawn



Dysfunctional family favourite: David Wenham (centre) as Brett, with Anthony Hayes and John Poison

The film pans out over the course of an afternoon and a night like a contaminated episode of 'Neighbours'

dialogue, à la Eric Bana's *Chopper* – a gallows humour that suggests these characters are not stupid, just stuck and desperate and frustrated.

Early on, their permanently frazzled mother Sandra (Lynette Curran) tries to pacify her weirdly giddy boys with a homemade 'tandoori'. As alternative dinner scenes go, it's on a par with *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre's* manic gathering. The tension is palpable, the wounds almost visible. It'll take more than a plate of sausages to temper Brett's rampant paranoia and seething sense of familial and

worldly injustice. He wants his say and he'll have it, even with a mouthful of grub.

Showing a savvy touch for a first-time director, Rowan Woods intercuts these convincingly tetchy exchanges with a series of unnerving flashforwards, grim glimpses of the hereafter, bearing blankly informative screen titles: "18 hours later", "two days later", "three weeks later". Throughout it's all Brett, Brett, Brett, Brett. His moods dominate the house. His exchanges with Michelle (Toni Collette), his sexually unsatisfied sort-of-girlfriend, have a hangnail-like, who's-going-to-go-for-who-first feel to them. The result is cruelly inevitable.

David Wenham's performance as Brett, which he honed as a member of the original stage cast, is fiercely charismatic. Producer Robert Connolly said of the film: "I saw the story as a *Mean Streets* for the suburbs. It is driven by an extraordinary protagonist, whose psychology is as fascinating for an audience as Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver* or David Thewlis's Johnny in *Naked*."

An obvious influence on recent films such as *Animal Kingdom* and *Snowtown*, *The Boys* has something of the raw artistry of Alan Clarke. Like Clarke, Woods seems to have a genuine connection with his working-class subject-matter; he never looks down on or judges the boys' banal and brutal complexities. Like Fred and Rose, they could be your neighbours, and who knows what goes on behind closed doors, on the 'inside'?

After the film's premiere at Berlin in 1998, *Variety* described it as "a chilling, corrosive depiction of the banality of evil". It was released on DVD in 2003 but has long been unavailable, except second-hand or via a low-quality YouTube link. But after the recent rerelease of the similarly confrontational outback classic *Wake in Fright*, hopefully it's only a matter of time before the boys are allowed back out into the wider world to begin the cycle again, to repeat their awful history. 📺

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

"Ultimately, 'The Boys' avoids giving us any answers to the question of why crimes like this are committed by grounding its banal evil in a casebook full of contributory factors... but it leaves us with Brett's obdurately opaque psychopathy. This makes for powerful drama, but the film allows us to escape at the very point our own mounting horror makes us desperate to do so. The suspicion arises that by vividly depicting a detailed day in the life of the so-called underclass, dramatically destined to end in random viciousness, 'The Boys' leaves itself open to an interpretation that aligns it with reactionary tabloid views"

Richard Falcon,
Sight & Sound, November 1998

Books



Striking out: Richard Pryor and Harvey Keitel in *Blue Collar*

DIVINE MADNESS

FURIOUS COOL

RICHARD PRYOR AND THE
WORLD THAT MADE HIM

David Henry and Joe Henry, Algonquin
Books of Chapel Hill, 297pp, \$25.95, ISBN
9781616200787

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

What exactly this says about the medium or the system of production that exists around it I do not know, but the plain fact is that some of the greatest comic talents to come out of the United States of America have never found the opportunity to wholly transmit that talent into the movies. The anarchic ad-libber Jonathan Winters, who died earlier this year, is one such figure. Another is Richard Franklin Lennox Thomas Pryor.

Pryor's film appearances aren't as negligible as conventional wisdom suggests: he has a bushel of supporting parts in which he is never less than memorable, is the anchor of Paul Schrader's 1978 debut *Blue Collar*, and in 1979's *Richard Pryor: Live in Concert* invented the stand-up concert film, of which it remains the finest hour. Far more than

any single performance, however, Pryor's legacy rests on his having spoken out loud about an entire section of the black American experience that had been previously kept from public view.

Richard was born to a legacy of barrelhouse bawdiness, in Peoria, Illinois, when it was a roaring, wide-open river town. His grandmother, who raised him, was mistress of a brothel. He has told the story of these years himself, as writer/star/director of a 1986 autobiographical film, *Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life is Calling*, and in a 1995 autobiography called *Pryor Convictions: And Other Life Sentences*—both, sad to say, attempted well after Pryor was past the height of his powers.

The latest attempt to make some sense of Pryor's divine madness comes from the fraternal tag-team David and Joe Henry, entertainment industry professionals here collaborating on their first book. White boys who grew up outside Akron, Ohio, the Henrys tell how they became enamoured of Pryor after seeing him on a Friday night airing of ABC's *The Midnight Special* in 1973. That the authors are not from the same cultural background as their subject is by no means a liability, though one wonders if they feel compelled to go a little easier on Pryor for his fecklessness and abusive behaviour

than a black author might. Pryor's history of battering women isn't overlooked, but is usually accompanied by the implicit suggestion that his genius excuses all. Not everyone comes off so well: James B. Harris, who gave Pryor a part in his somnambulist 1973 film *Sleeping Beauty* (aka *Some Call it Loving*), gets an unfairly dismissive treatment, while the authors seem to have a particular axe to grind with Chevy Chase.

Aside from the occasional bit of metaphor mixology, the Henrys have a loose, fluid style well suited to drawing together disparate cultural associations without visible strain, particularly in *Furious Cool*'s first half. This is the book's strongest section, not only because a rise to power almost always makes for more pleasurable reading than a fall from grace, but because it's here that the Henrys follow an announced intention to "mine the soil out of which he grew, and map the cultural landscape from which he emerged", concentrating as much on what the title calls "the world that made" Pryor as on the man himself. Deft digressions abound—a discourse on a skit performed by Clinton "Dusty" Fletcher called 'Open the Door, Richard' feeds into a larger overview of black comic performance, as well as links between Richard's comedy and

long-standing African-American traditions such as “playing the dozens” – trading insults in front of an audience, a form of “signifying”. Here the Henrys succeed in making the period breathe, establishing their subject’s significance not only as *sui generis* genius, but as a repository of a folk tradition as old as America itself.

Pryor was not born performing. In fact, he’d planned on the military being his ticket out of Peoria, but was kicked out of the army for a piece of amateur film criticism: when a white soldier was guffawing too loudly during a screening of Douglas Sirk’s 1959 race-issue melodrama *Imitation of Life*, Pryor stabbed him repeatedly. A civilian again, he was forced into his back-up plan, show biz. After gigging through the all-black ‘chitlin circuit’ theatres of the Midwest, and finally making it in Greenwich Village in the days of Woody Allen and George Carlin, Pryor made his professional breakthrough doing comedy in the amiable, non-threatening mould of Bill Cosby. This was followed by a personal breakthrough, and a retreat from the public eye in 1971 to Northern California’s East Bay, home of a burgeoning black intellectual scene and the Black Panthers, where Pryor bathed

The Pryor of the 1980s was like a Col. Tom Parker-controlled Elvis or the neutered ‘pseudo-Falstaff’ of ‘The Merry Wives of Windsor’

in the intellectual and political ferment.

When Richard returned, he didn’t just open the door, but kicked it in. Documenting Richard’s profane peak in the 1970s, when he was no longer being shaped by the culture so much as shaping it, *Furious Cool* loses some of its breadth and range, hemmed in by a duty to recount its subject’s increasingly erratic behaviour – a sense of humour wasn’t the only thing he’d picked up in Peoria’s pool halls. Pryor’s travails will be familiar to anyone who knows his stand-up specials. Most infamous is a near-death experience, a possible attempt at self-immolation while freebasing cocaine, described in 1982’s *Live on the Sunset Strip*. The vulnerability and the shamelessness with which he talked about his struggles won him the undying affection of his public. And like any affection that came his way, he abused it. Pryor was a shadow of his former self after the fire. The Henrys compare the paychecking Richard of the 1980s to a Col. Tom Parker-controlled Elvis and the neutered “pseudo-Falstaff” of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1986, the already diminished Pryor would only be diminished further in the final two decades of his life. Luckily, his prime was well-recorded – supplement *Furious Cool* with the box set *No Pryor Restraint: Live in Concert*, recently released by Shout! Factory, which collects Pryor’s three concert films alongside seven CDs’ worth of Pryor’s stand-up, from concert albums and elsewhere. No one movie pinned down why Richard mattered, but this comes awfully close. ☺

AFTER DRACULA

THE 1930S HORROR FILM

Alison Peirse, I.B. Tauris, 234pp, £16.99. ISBN 978-1848855311

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Despite the fact that Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (1931) wasn’t even the first film adaptation of Bram Stoker’s novel, there is a sense in which it counts as the first true horror film. F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) is a German art movie, made outside a traditional film industry that could even support a *Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919). German expressionist cinema of the 1920s is fantastical, often horrific, and even draws on literary sources which would be key to later horror – Karl Freund’s *Mad Love* (1935) is a remake of Robert Wiene’s *The Hands of Orlac* (1925). The grotesque melodramas Browning and others contrived for Lon Chaney, including the faux-vampire whodunit *London After Midnight* (1927), are historical, exotic or gruesome crime subjects, seldom featuring the supernatural.

Dracula, based on the Broadway production which introduced Bela Lugosi to the role, was described in its day as a ‘mystery’. Universal must have seen it as a successor to their silent hit *The Cat and the Canary* (1927), itself just one of many drawing-room/hooded fiend comedy-thrillers derived from Broadway shows and crime novels. However, *Dracula* clicked at the box office and the studio reacted by readying *Frankenstein* (1931), inspiring rival outfits to greenlight their own responses, Paramount’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1931), Warners’ *Doctor X* (1932) and MGM’s *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932). Sometime in 1932, the term ‘horror pictures’ crept into use as a way of describing a genre that had evolved out of German expressionism and old dark house mysteries. Alison Peirse doesn’t make any claims for having discovered the first use of the term, but notes that it crops up in trade reports about studios jumping on the bandwagon by producing their own horrors to rival Universal and in stuffily outraged memoranda from worthies at censorship bodies in America and Great

Britain whose instant reaction to identifying the new trend was to want to stamp it out.

This book doesn’t present a complete overview of the mushroom growth of horror in the 1930s, but a series of essays on particular films that develop or deviate from the Universal template. One of Peirse’s selections, Carl Dreyer’s *Vampyr* (1932), was in production well before *Dracula* was released – it’s the only movie she considers which would have been made if the Browning film didn’t exist. One suspects that Dreyer, who abandoned studio backing to seek finance from a wealthy patron of the arts to whom he also gave the lead role, was miffed to find that the arcane subject matter of his movie, which might have been a response to Murnau, was the stuff of a runaway Hollywood hit. As an aside, *Vampyr* was passed with cuts by the BBFC, who had banned Dreyer’s earlier, far more austere *Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928).

Peirse’s other subjects are: Freund’s *The Mummy* (1932), a semi-remake of *Dracula* tailored to the break-out star of *Frankenstein*, Boris Karloff, which is assessed for its use of subjective flashbacks; Erle Kenton’s *Island of Lost Souls* (1932) – not that Kenton gets much of a mention – an adaptation of H.G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr Moreau* which features contest winner Kathleen Burke as the Panther Woman, a figure Peirse examines as one of the few female monsters of the early years of the cycle; Victor Halperin’s *White Zombie* (1932), looked at for its depiction of race and sexuality in a voodoo context (the implication of the title, of course, is that *Black Zombie* wouldn’t be news); Edgar G. Ulmer’s Poe-derived Karloff-and-Lugosi vehicle *The Black Cat* (1934), a rare instance of locating horror in architectural modernism rather than gothic throwback; a slender cycle (*The Ghoul*, 1933, *The Clairvoyant*, 1935, *The Man Who Changed His Mind*, 1936) backed by Michael Balcon which give the lie to the notion that the genre didn’t exist in the British film industry in the era of the H certificate; and Stuart Walker’s *WereWolf of London* (1935), an influential and innovative werewolf film whose undervaluing Peirse notes was inaugurated by its own studio, Universal, who opted to open it while the super-production *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) was still in theatres.

Peirse microfocuses on elements within the films she chooses to assess – even more than most academic books, this is a collection of essays bracketed by a what-I-am-about-to-say introduction and a what-I-have-just-said conclusion. Often, this means not addressing other factors about the films, perhaps on the grounds that they’ve been covered elsewhere. There’s little here on the figure of the horror star, though Karloff and Lugosi turn up often, except in analysis of the way both were put forward as the heir to the prematurely dead Chaney, which as much as anything served to render comprehensible something new and disturbing by putting it in a familiar box – in the early 1930s, audiences might not have been sure what a horror film was but they knew what a Lon Chaney movie was. If he’d lived, Chaney might have played *Dracula* and other monsters; equally, he might have played Long John Silver or Captain Bligh. Karloff and Lugosi were on a different track. ☹



Werewolf? There wolf: *WereWolf of London*

WORKING TOGETHER

NOTES ON BRITISH FILM
COLLECTIVES IN THE 1970S

Edited by Dan Kidner and Petra Bauer, Focal Point Gallery, 274pp, £15.00, ISBN 1907185054

Reviewed by Sukhdev Sandhu

Received wisdom used to be that British cinema was moribund in the 1970s. It was lamented that even the *Carry On* films had gone crap. Give or take the odd horror film, and outliers such as Kevin Brownlow's *Winstanley* (1975), the standard line is that just as with literature (inert until the arrival of Salman Rushdie-style postcolonialism) and pop music (apparently desperate for punk's slash-and-burn dynamism), the 1970s was a desert.

Such sweeping historiographies rarely tell the whole story. In recent years, a growing number of artists and curators have begun to explore one of the most neglected aspects of British film culture in the 1970s: the rise of film collectives such as The London Women's Film Group, Cinema Action and the Berwick Street Film Collective. Put it down to what Hal Foster has called "archive fever", a renewed interest in the 'militant image', the art world's enduring fondness for spotlighting utopian or vanguardist groups from the past or, more generally, a creeping sense that today's


recessional and austerity-plagued cultural landscape has a lot in common with the 1970s: a mode of filmmaking that for many years was either ignored or dismissed as a leftist relic of pre-identity politics is now beginning to get its due.

Working Together has been assembled by two individuals with a commitment to commitment. Petra Bauer is a Swedish artist whose films include *Sisters!* (2010), about the Southall Black Sisters, a group set up by Asian and Afro-Caribbean women in 1979, initially to campaign against domestic abuse; Dan Kidner is a curator involved with bringing back into circulation the film essays of the English maverick Marc Karlin. Gorgeously produced, on roughly textured paper that evokes the heady days when cine discourse was circulated via Gestetnered and mimeographed documents, the book reproduces key articles from journals such as *Afterimage*, *Screen* and *Red Rag* in which the politics and practice of radical cinema are discussed with passion and rigour. These are supplemented by insightful interviews with collective members and essays by Esther Leslie (exploring the impact of Brecht) and Nina Power (offering readings of 1973's *Women of the Rhonda* and 1974's *The Amazing Equal Pay Show*).

Some of the debates – between activist and deconstructive approaches to political image-making, for instance – may have become leaden or overly polarised by the end of the 1970s, but from today's viewpoint the earnestness with which they were waged is genuinely thrilling.



Berwick Street Film Collective's *Nightcleaners*

It's valuable to be reminded of a time when it was commonplace in Britain to talk of cinema and social change. The book is not just an exercise in nostalgia though: now that DVDs and online links decentralise the traditional cinematic venue to a previously unimaginable degree, it's bracing and even galvanising to read about the social spaces in which films were exhibited – workers' education centres, or East End pubs frequented by the same dockers whose struggles were being documented. Less exhaustive (by design) than Margaret Dickinson's still-essential *Rogue Reels: Oppositional Film in Britain 1945-90*, *Working Together* is a reminder of the crucial difference between independent cinema and indie cinema. Hopefully, it will inspire others to continue its remapping of post-war British film history. 

THE CINEMA OF SERGEI PARAJANOV

By James Steffen. University of Wisconsin Press, 306pp, \$29.95, ISBN 9780299296544

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Sergei Parajanov (1924-90) is so often canonised, alongside Andrei Tarkovsky, as the Soviet Union's most important post-war director that it's initially surprising that this is the first English-language book about him. However, the peculiar challenges are laid out in a lengthy 'Note on Transliteration' before the text proper begins, covering the issue of four source languages (Armenian, Georgian, Russian, Ukrainian) and three alphabets. Indeed, the Romanised spelling of Parajanov's own name is far from settled: Steffen diplomatically opts for the one favoured by the Sergei Parajanov Museum in Yerevan.

The book is not a biography (although Steffen tantalisingly admits plans to write one) but it does include much biographical material, including riveting behind-the-scenes accounts of the many diplomatic battles Parajanov fought in order to realise his unconventional vision, and the compromises that he had to make. It's no coincidence that his major films all have a strong literary basis, since this made them easier to green-light; and for all the challenges of mounting such films within the Soviet film industry, it's unlikely that he would have got any further in a more commercialised environment.

Steffen also explores the complicated reality behind various myths about Parajanov and his films, especially their alleged 'dissidence' and 'nationalism'. In fact, the Soviet film industry

was unexpectedly (if under-reportedly) keen to highlight ethnic regional cultures, and if these often came in ersatz packages, Parajanov was just as guilty of inventing supposedly traditional rituals and artefacts. Although *Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors* (1964) was adored by Ukrainian nationalists, *The Legend of the Suram Fortress* (1984) was vilified in its native Georgia for allegedly tainting local legends with Armenian and Persian influences. Similarly, the (slightly longer) Armenian version of *The Colour of Pomegranates* (1969) has been marketed as the 'director's cut', in preference to the Soviet version – since the subject of the film is the Armenian poet Sayat Nova, the intertitles are supposedly more 'authentic'; in fact, they're no more Parajanov-approved than the Russian intertitles. (Usefully, Steffen lays

Two of the book's eight chapters are revealingly subtitled 'The Film That Might Have Been' and 'Unproduced Scripts'




Georgia peach: Parajanov and his wife, Svetlana

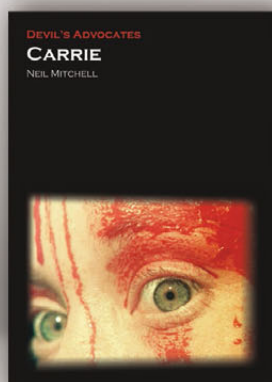
out the structural differences between the two extant cuts and Parajanov's original conception.)

Parajanov's films often appear so exotic that it's easy to assume that they're completely *sui generis*. Steffen traces their own local and occasional Western inspirations (unsurprisingly, Parajanov was a fan of Fellini and Pasolini) while also exploring the influence of his work on such diverse talents as the filmmakers of the 'Ukrainian Poetic School', Derek Jarman, Emir Kusturica, Mohsen Makhmalbaf and Kira Muratova, as well as assorted music videos, a form perhaps better suited to Parajanov's tableau-based aesthetic than the feature.

Although all of Parajanov's completed films (and television documentaries) are discussed in detail, perhaps the book's greatest value lies in its exploration of his many unrealised projects – one, *Kiev Frescos* (1966), was an incomplete torso, but most never progressed beyond the script-and-sketches stage. The fact that two of the book's eight chapters are subtitled 'The Film That Might Have Been' and 'Unproduced Scripts' is gloomily revealing in itself; another chapter covers his persecution and imprisonment for much of the 1973-82 period. (Parajanov's attitude towards officialdom is encapsulated by the KGB-circulated story that when the state-published *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* asked him for biographical information, he replied "Inform your readers that I died in 1968 due to the genocidal policies of the Soviet regime.")

The only complaint about an otherwise enthralling and desperately overdue book is that its illustrations are in black and white, doing one of the cinema's great masters of colour a severe disservice. But few are likely to read it without prior exposure (happily, Parajanov's major masterpieces are now available in excellent DVD editions), and Steffen supplies plenty of verbal colour. 

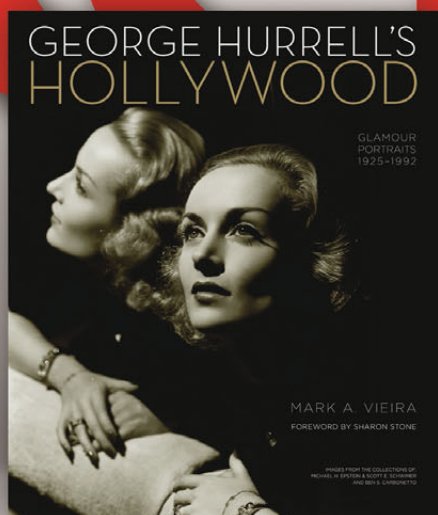
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CARRIE

By Neil Mitchell, Auteur/Devil's Advocates, 110pp, paperback, £9.99, ISBN 9781906733728
Brian De Palma's 1976 adaptation of Stephen King's debut novel is one of the defining films of the 1970s New Hollywood and a horror classic in its own right. Neil Mitchell's *Devil's Advocate* explores the film not just in terms of a formal breakdown – its themes, stylistic tropes, technical approaches, uses of colour and sound, dialogue and visual symbolism – but also the multitude of other factors that have contributed to its classic status, from the origins of the novel itself to the sequel and remake as well as the social, political and cultural climate of the era, from second wave feminism to representations of adolescence.

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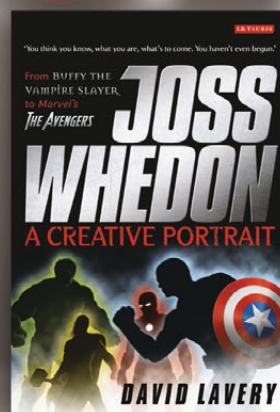


GEORGE HURRELL'S HOLLYWOOD

Glamour Portraits 1925-1992

By Mark A. Vieira, Running Press, 416pp, hardback, illustrated, £40, ISBN 9780762450398
Widely considered the master of the Hollywood glamour portrait, George Hurrell photographed every star from Greta Garbo to Humphrey Bogart to Sharon Stone. *George Hurrell's Hollywood* is the definitive retrospective. Spanning his entire career, it's a fabulous montage of new insights, unseen portraits and behind-the-scenes stories that Hurrell fans and photography and film buffs will treasure. Hundreds of pristine images showcase the photographer's work with Hollywood icons, and the text recounts his life through previously untold stories of his fall from grace and eventual comeback, providing the ultimate overview of the trailblazing artist's work, and an indispensable treasury of Hollywood lore.

<http://amzn.to/1eEb6RH>



JOSS WHEDON, A CREATIVE PORTRAIT

From Buffy the Vampire Slayer to Marvel's The Avengers

By David Lavery, I.B. Tauris, 296pp, paperback, £10.99, ISBN 9781848850309
Spring 2012 saw the return to creative and critical success of Joss Whedon, with the release of both his horror flick *The Cabin in the Woods* and the box-office sensation, Marvel's *The Avengers*. After establishing himself as a premier cult creator, the man who gave us great television with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Firefly*, *Dollhouse* and web series *Dr Horrible's Sing-along Blog*, as well as comic books including *Fray* and *Astonishing X-Men*, finally became the filmmaker he'd long dreamed of being. Drawing on a wide variety of sources, *Joss Whedon, A Creative Portrait* offers an intellectual biography of Whedon, tracking his career arc from fan boy to major filmmaker.

www.ibtauris.com



GLOBAL MEXICAN CINEMA

Its Golden Age

By Robert McKee Irwin and Maricruz Castro Ricalde, BFI Publishing/Palgrave Macmillan, 240pp, £22.99, ISBN 9781844575329
The golden age of Mexican cinema, which spanned the 1930s through to the 1950s, saw Mexico's film industry become one of the most productive in the world, exercising a decisive influence on national culture and identity. This book explores the global reception and impact of Mexican golden-age cinema, and explains the key aspects of its international success, from its role in forming a nostalgic cultural landscape for Mexican emigrants working in the United States, to its economic and cultural influence on Latin America, Spain and Yugoslavia. The authors reveal how its film industry helped establish Mexico as a longstanding centre of cultural influence for the Spanish-speaking world and beyond.

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LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

I greatly enjoyed reading Vic Pratt's very thorough account of the fate of *The Wicker Man* ('Long arm of the lore', S&S, October) – especially as it referred to the significant screening of the film on BBC television in 1988.

In the mid-1980s, when I was working as a film programmer at the BBC, I was passed a very fuzzy VHS tape of the elusive 'long version' of *The Wicker Man*. I decided to try to track down this print for showing in BBC2's *The Film Club*, but then the idea of *Moviedrome* and Alex Cox came up, and it was felt *The Wicker Man* in its complete glory would make an impressive opening night presentation. Eventually I made contact with the film's US distributor, one John Simon, and he agreed to loan the BBC a copy of this 'long version', which I had timed from the VHS at around 100 minutes and which included the early scenes set in the police station. But as the date of transmission came closer, Mr Simon suddenly proved very elusive and would never return my messages. I was becoming quite panicky until I finally received at home a collect call at about 3am from him saying, yes, he was sending over a one-inch videotape. This did indeed arrive with only days to spare, but I was dismayed to find it wasn't the same version I had seen on VHS, as that early extra sequence was missing. I edited the important 'new' scenes (which looked very soft and dirty, especially when converted from NTSC to PAL) into a transfer of the shorter UK print, and what is now being called the 'medium' version was subsequently transmitted. To compound my disappointment, not long after I made a trip to New York where I found VHS copies of the 'long' version in bargain bins going for a few dollars!

Obviously we have come some way since those days, and I very much look forward to seeing the new 'restoration' of *The Wicker Man*. But then, ever since seeing the film 40 years ago in that famous double-bill with *Don't Look Now*, it has never disappointed me.

David Thompson, London

GLAD WE'VE CLEARED THAT ONE UP

My inner pedant forces me to point out that *The Wicker Man* has never been a set text on any A-level media studies syllabus, as Vic Pratt suggests. The film was, however, one of a number of options for study on the A-level film studies syllabus. It was removed in 2007 and is no longer a set text, although it remains a popular choice as a case study in the British Horror topic. Yes, I should probably get out more.

Rob Hind, Gosport

INTO GREAT SILENTS

In his perceptive and timely article about the welcome revival of interest in silent cinema ('Deep Focus: The peak of silent cinema', S&S, November), Ian Christie says: "The 1960s and 70s saw the beginnings of scattered efforts to collect and preserve what remained from the silent era..." This is slightly misleading. The first film

LETTER OF THE MONTH HIGH ON THE RICTUS SCALE



Claudia's smile at the end of *Magnolia* ('Endings', S&S, November) brings to mind another unforgettable moment when the fourth wall is broken and the audience intensely feels the small glimmer of hope in a smile. It is, of course, at the end of Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria* (1957). Cabiria, played by the magnificent Giulietta Masina, has had the stuffing knocked out of her (once more) by her unctuous dream man turned dangerous con man. As she emerges battered and broken from the forest where he had taken her to do away with her, Giulietta mixes with a group of young revellers who appear out of nowhere,

singing, dancing and playing instruments. She begins to reconnect with life through their carefree joy in simply being alive, and responds to their friendly greetings with a tentative smile, which is then turned to the camera and to us for no more than a few seconds. As Philip Concannon writes regarding Claudia's smile, it "tells us that she might just be OK", just as Cabiria's smile conveys the same delicate hope for her – and through her, for us. People really do care about her smiling, no matter what Paul Thomas Anderson's satire of audience reactions might say to the contrary! Rebecca West University of Chicago

archives – notably those in the United States, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK – had been established long before this, in the early 1930s (the Imperial War Museum had been preserving films since 1919), and their efforts to collect silent films were immediate and far from "scattered". Films that had survived from the (then recent) silent era were precisely what they set about acquiring, an important example being the donation to the BFI's National Film Library (as the archive was then called) of the prints imported for screening by the (London) Film Society, which included Russian, French, German and other European classics. By the 1960s, when most of the major film-producing countries had national film archives, extant silent films comprised a significant part of their collections, including, at the very least, most of the 15 movies highlighted by Ian. The 1960s and 1970s saw not the "beginnings" of efforts to save and restore silent films, but certainly, perhaps, a reawakening and continuation of those efforts by archivists and impassioned collectors alike.

Clyde Jeavons (former head of the National Film Archive), London

ONE OF OUR DINOSAURS IS MISSING

What a shame. You have the great David Thomson writing about the great Eddie Marsan ('A ghost in the machine', S&S, October)...

and omit to mention his incredible work in *Tyrannosaur*. That's like writing about Paul Newman and forgetting to include *The Hustler*. Consequently, an otherwise intriguing and timely article suffers from a lack of credibility. Lawrence Jackson, London

FAINTLY MISLEADING

In his review of *The Great Beauty* (S&S, October), Roger Clarke describes how in the opening sequence a Japanese tourist "faints from the sheer beauty of what he is seeing". The synopsis also refers to this character fainting, but Pasquale Iannone's feature in the same issue describes the incident as a death, and this is both the most obvious reading of what we see on screen and one which mirrors Jep's words at the other end of the film – "Everything ends with death. But before there is life." Surely this man is not fainting, but dying. Paul Colbeck, London

Additions and corrections

October p74 *For Those in Peril* Cert 18, 92m 19s, 8,308 ft +8 frames
November p71 *Closed Circuit* Cert 15, 96m 20s, 8,670 ft +0 frames;
p75 *The Fifth Estate* Cert 15, 127m 59s, 11,518 ft +8 frames; p77 *The Lebanese Rocket Society* Cert PG, 96m 9s, 8,653 ft +8 frames; p78 *Like Father, like Son* Cert PG, 121m 8s, 10,902 ft +0 frames; p79 *Machete Kills* Cert 15, 107m 42s, 9,693 ft +0 frames; p81 *Muscle Shoals* Cert PG, 111m 45s, 9,996 ft +0 frames; p88 *Project Wild Thing* Cert PG, 82m 58s, 7,467 ft +0 frames; p92 *We Are What We Are* Cert 18, 105m 19s, 9,478 ft +8 frames

PRESSURE



Sympathy struggles with mockery in the abrupt, defeated conclusion of Horace Ové's drama about Black Power in Britain

By Ashley Clark

Widely regarded as the first black British feature film, Horace Ové's neorealism-inspired *Pressure* (1975) focuses on the tribulations of recent school-leaver Tony (Herbert Norville). Tony, like my own father, is a British-born son of first-generation immigrant parents who came to England from the Caribbean in the 1950s and 60s. Facing the myriad pressures listed in the film's sweetly intoned title track (parental, social, mental, 'Babylon' aka the police), the befuddled young man floats through Ové's episodic, quasi-*Bildungsroman* like a pinball in slow motion. His putative romance with a friendly white girl is scotched by a hostile landlady; he can't get a job (he's either shut out by racist employers or overqualified for menial labour); he's shown to be thoroughly ill-suited to the life of petty crime preferred by the group of jaded ne'er-do-wells he falls in with; and his Trinidadian parents – in particular his histrionic mother – are stuck in their ways.

Tony, however, gets the most aggravation from his older brother Colin (Oscar James), a staunch Black Power advocate. Colin laments his failure to "get him [Tony] to think black", seemingly unable to grasp that Tony's experience as a young black man born in Britain is different to his own upbringing in Trinidad. "You've got somewhere to go back to," Tony tells Colin, "You have the dream of sun, sea and palm trees. What have I got? Office

blocks!" Yet Tony eventually becomes involved in the cause; not, one suspects, through any burning desire for political agency, but rather because his other avenues of advancement have disappeared. It just so happens that the first Black Power rally the luckless Tony attends is raided by police, who apprehend Colin on confected drugs charges.

Throughout, Ové views the British Black Power movement with a mixture of respect for its overarching mission to foster black pride, and scorn for its inherent contradictions and lack of political coherence. This approach is no better illustrated than in the final scene – a 'Free Colin' protest outside the Old Bailey – which blends a documentarian's sympathy with an undeniable sense of mockery of the shambolic nature of their efforts. The protest should constitute the film's big, triumphant finish. Instead it must qualify as one of the most depressing ever realised on film. In an atmosphere of deafening silence, against a glaucous grey sky, a ragtag group of demonstrators dourly traipse around in a circle. This being England, it doesn't take long for the heavens to open: a wicked but utterly believable *deus ex machina*. There's bleak humour here – it took my third viewing to catch the delicious sight gag of a white protester unwittingly holding up a sign reading 'White people are devils' – but the overall vibe is one of limp defeat.

In the sequence's final image, Tony, natty outfit now soaked through, enters the frame, evidently

This being England, it doesn't take long for the heavens to open: a wicked but utterly believable deus ex machina

struggling against the elements. He gives up on the wooden pole and flings it to the ground, adding to the chaotic, debris-strewn tableau. He raises his banner above his head – its slogan 'Power to the people' now rendered bitterly ironic – and uses it to shield himself from the rain. In this subtle, entirely natural gesture, ideology is poetically subsumed by practicality. The frame suddenly freezes, the title song (lilting melody, bitter lyrics) plays again and the credits roll.

The first time I saw *Pressure*, I was shocked at the ending's abruptness, but further viewings reveal it as making perfect sense. A conventional conclusion would not only have jarred with the film's broadly observational style, but would also have contradicted the unresolved, work-in-progress nature of its central character; for better or worse, this is Tony's Britain, and he's here to stay, however grim things might be in the present.

It's a shame that the fiercely talented Ové was unable to develop a proper career as feature filmmaker. A prolific photographer and documentarian, Ové's only other film to hit UK cinemas was 1986's *Playing Away*, although *Pressure* was undoubtedly influential – most obviously, the police-raid plot and the political enlightenment of a central character both featured in Menelik Shabazz's *Burning an Illusion* (1981). But wouldn't it have been nice to have seen Tony – or at least a version of Tony – grow up on screen, reflecting a particular element of British society in the same way that the famously freeze-framed Antoine Doinel (in Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* in 1959) did for the French? Sadly, the black British experience is one that's been badly underserved in our national cinema. As such, the poignancy of *Pressure*'s final image extends far beyond the text. 📍

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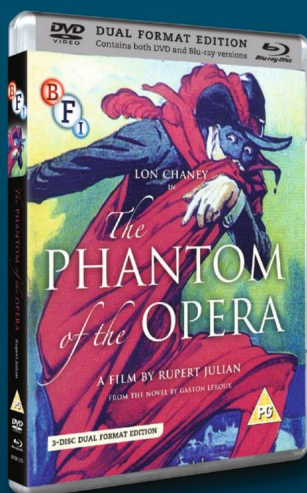
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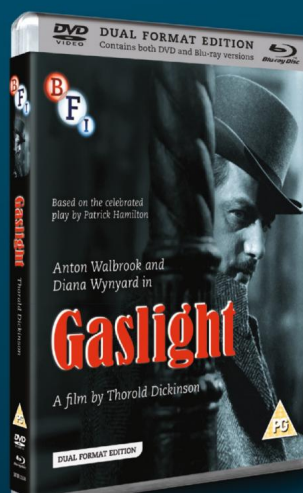
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